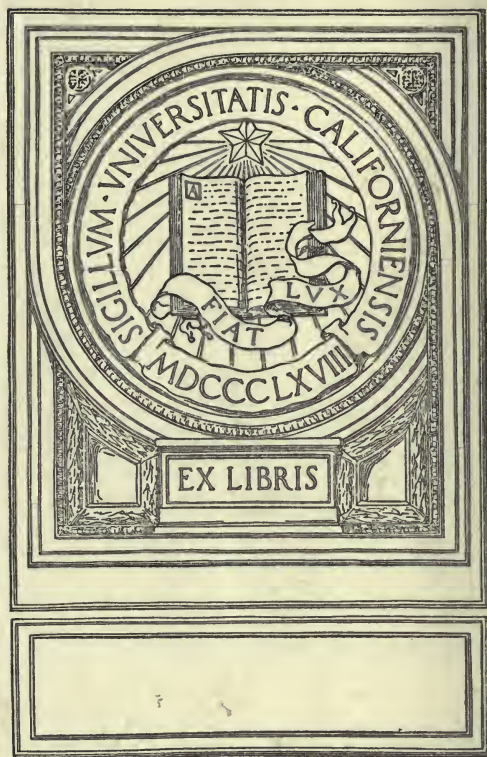


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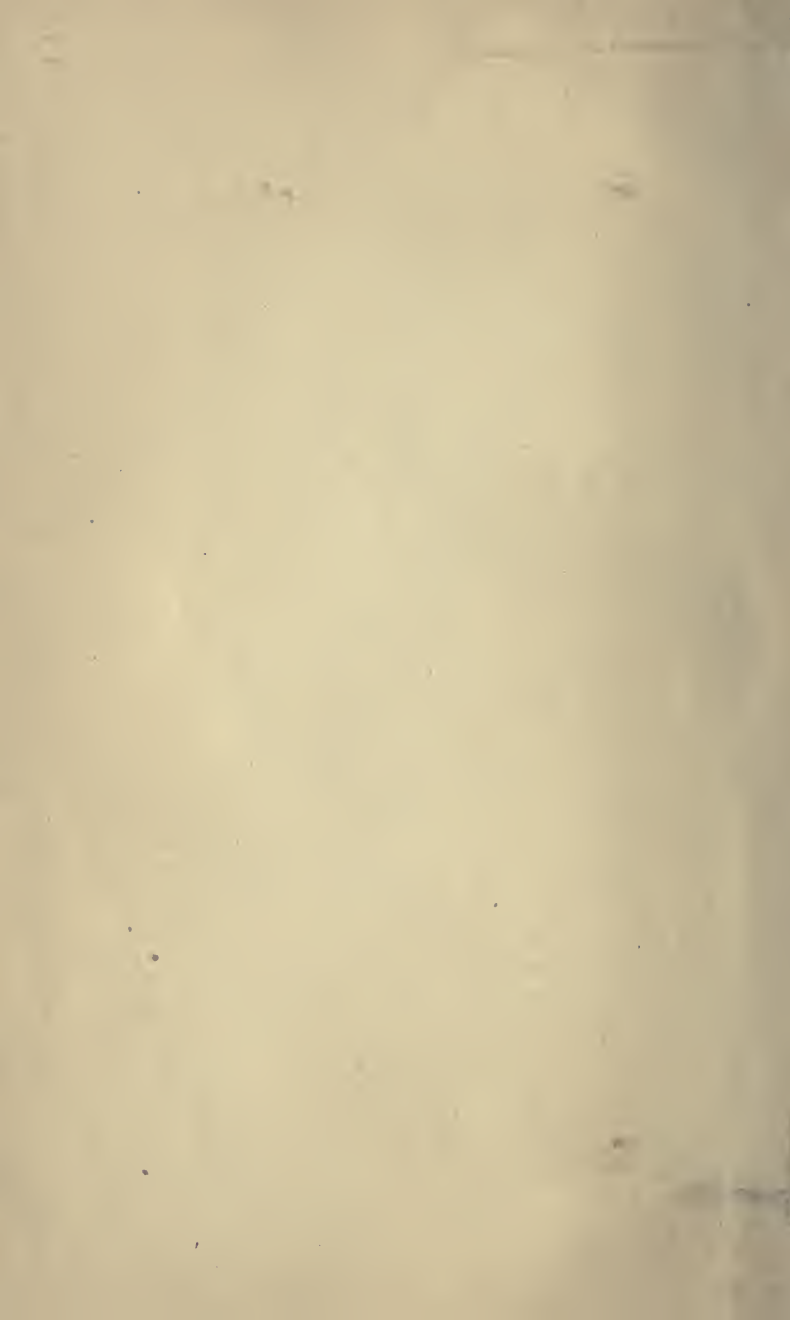


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THE
OFFICER'S BRIDE.

A Tale of the French Revolution.

BY
OCTAVE FEUILLET.



NEW YORK:
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THE OFFICER'S BRIDE.

AN HISTORICAL NOVEL.

BY OCTAVE FEUILLET.

AUTHOR OF "THE COUNT DE CAMORS," "THE AMOURS OF PHILIPPE;
OR, PHILIPPE'S LOVE AFFAIRS."

CHAPTER I.

ON THE SEA-SHORE.

ON the southern coast of Finisterre, is a sheltered bay, on which stands a lovely village, which before it was infested by artists, gloried in its pretty women, in the most charming of costumes. Unfortunately, artists found their way there; the women of F—— learned that they were effective and brilliant, that in short, they were picturesque; after which they began to wear their national costumes with considerable awkwardness, and to look as if they were masquerading in the *coiffes* that had been handed down from mother to daughter.

In the year 1795, the happy serenity in which this

little village basked, was almost a phenomenon, for up to this date, the Breton insurrection had enlisted few recruits in this furthestmost point of the Peninsula. The Republic was here little more than a name. The fishermen of F—— finding that their boats, their wives, and their homes, were respected, as well as their old rector, who, in spite of the imprudence of his language was either tolerated or ignored, concluded that the Republic had forgotten them, and in their turn forgot the Republic.

Such was the position of the inhabitants of F—— toward the National Convention, when on the 12th of June, 1795, at dawn, this harmony—the quiet of a mutual tolerance—was inopportunately disturbed by loud blows upon the doors of the most conspicuous persons in the village.

Greatly startled, the villagers perceived that the Square in front of the church, was crowded with the blue uniforms and red plumes of the Grenadiers of the Republic. A detachment of some fifty men, preceded by two mounted officers, had invaded the village, thus violating the rights of neutrals, which this little corner of the world flattered itself it had acquired—being as yet unstained by any Revolutionary disturbance.

The panic created in the village, by this brutal aggression, yielded by degrees to the pacific assurances of the officers, and to the friendly bearing of the soldiers. Soon the villagers had no other anxiety than that of discovering the meaning and end of the

expedition. Notwithstanding the small number of the soldiers, the rank of one of the officers who wore the epaulettes of a Commandant, seem to indicate that this military movement was not without importance.

In the rear of the Republican troops, were several saddle horses led by a Breton peasant in his national garb.

Just as the good fishermen of Finisterre were becoming wild with curiosity, they were still further excited by another most unusual spectacle. A frigate, evidently English, suddenly appeared in the bay. It was clear that it was coming as near the shore as prudence would permit.

This second event furnished a ready explanation of the first; the frigate wished to land a body of invaders, and the fleet, just arrived, was sent to prevent this from being done. A mental comparison between the forces of the Republican detachment, and those which might easily be contained in the capacious frigate, gave the inevitable issue of the contest. This ingenious discovery was not made with entire satisfaction, for to do justice to the dwellers in this fishing town, it must be admitted that the colors of Old England were not more acceptable to them, than were those of the French Republic.

Singularly enough, the idea awakened in the minds of the fishermen, by the appearance of the frigate, was precisely that entertained by the soldiers scattered on the beach. Rough, but honest and pious children of

that Republic, whose heroism was its daily bread—accustomed to hearing and seeing acts of courage—full of that patriotic pride from which are born great memories, and noble deeds, these brave people saw nothing terrific in the unequal combat which they believed to be near at hand.

Five or six young soldiers, conscious of their inexperience, were asking advice of a Sergeant with a fierce gray moustache. This person was named Bruidoux, and he, instead of answering his inferiors at once, thought it advisable to keep up his dignity. He took from his hat a small plaid handkerchief, this he laid with great care upon the sand, and then seated himself with imposing majesty on this modest carpet. Opening a small leather bag, he filled his short clay pipe in the circumspect style of a man who knows the cost of things. After passing his thumb over the orifice of the pipe, in order to equalize the surface of this precious vegetable, Bruidoux took out his *briquet*, and struck a light with great ceremony. When the lighted pipe was at last adjusted in the corner of his lips, the solemn Sergeant stretched himself at full length on the sand—interposing his two clasped hands, between his neck and the damp sand, and as he sent enormous puffs of smoke toward the sky, he said:

“Well, Colibri, what is it that you want to know?”

“Only, Sergeant,” answered the awkward, round-faced youth, whom Bruidoux designated by the friendly name of Colibri, “I only want to know, if you think

we are here to prevent that frigate from landing a lot of men?"

"To this question," said Bruidoux, "I think I might possibly find some fifty answers, but I will content myself with two; *primo* — I think so; *secundo* — I hope so."

At these words, which received from the lips that uttered them, a certain sybilline authority, — the young grenadiers looked at each other, and communicated their secret impressions, by a nod and a slight projection of the lower lip.

"Sergeant," continued Colibri, timidly, "at the time you were fighting in America, I suppose you were obliged to be on the sea, somewhat?"

"Naturally, my boy, no land route was invented when I went to the New World! And then, as well as to-day, the voyage was far from being an agreeable or easy one."

"Then, Sergeant, you ought to know how many men a vessel of the size we see there, can carry."

"On a vessel of that capacity," answered Bruidoux, phlegmatically, "I have seen fifteen hundred men, and they could all have played the violin, without having their elbows more interfered with, than a blind man on a public square."

"Then," said Colibri, before whose eyes this statement opened a melancholy perspective, "you think that this frigate might contain a thousand men?"

"I do indeed, and with the greatest ease. What then, young man?"

"There are only fifty of us," answered Colibri, cautiously.

"Well?" asked Bruidoux.

"That will be twenty to one, Sergeant."

"Will you have the goodness to tell me," replied the old soldier, "what may be the name of that gay colored rag I see floating from their mast, which begins to affect my eyes disagreeably."

"It is the English flag," said Colibri.

"Good! And would you also be amiable enough to recall to my memory the name and quality of this jewel?" asked the Sergeant, as he pointed to the tri-color waving in the breeze above the stacked bayonets.

"That is the flag of the Republic."

"Precisely, citizen Colibri. Now, my boy, remember what I say; if ever you should happen to find yourself unexpectedly, face to face with a Prussian, or an English Army, or with any Federalists, all you have to do is to unfurl a banner like that, and you will see that army take to its heels, one and all, like a lad to whose back his mother's cook fastens a dish towel!"

"But, Sergeant," answered Colibri; "if we came here to fight, what are these saddle horses for, which that long-haired peasant leads in our rear?"

"Those horses," said the Sergeant, after a minute devoted to reflection; "are unquestionably intended for prisoners of importance."

"Look!" cried Colibri, "the vessel is stationary."

Sergeant Bruidoux raised himself on his elbow, and

shading his eyes with his hand, examined the frigate attentively for a few moments.

"I am inclined to believe," he said, "that within an hour my children, we shall see some hot work."

And Bruidoux shook the ashes from his pipe; and proceeded to fill it with as many tender precautions as at first.

"One thing, Colibri, would be rather agreeable to know," he said, "and that is, if we are within range of their cannon."

As the sergeant spoke the little group noticed that one of the boats was being gradually lowered into the water. This created a new excitement among the fishermen and the soldiers, who exchanged perplexed glances among themselves, while the commander of the Republican troops, standing on a high rock, examined through a glass, every movement on board the English ship. This personage, who was certainly not more than twenty-five, wore the cumbrous uniform of a Commandant, with an elegance very unusual at this period. The beauty of his features, combined with indefinable signs of race, would have assured to the young officer a cordial welcome in the most aristocratic salons, while the nobility of his brow and the gentle sweetness of his eyes, contrasted with the firmness of his mouth, would have attracted flattering notice in any réunion of women. Just behind this officer stood a young man of nineteen, with fair hair and rosy cheeks, in the uniform of an aid-de-camp.

This youth figured as lieutenant on the staff of General Hervé, and had for several days shared the command of this detachment with the young *chef de battalion*.

"Commandant Hervé," cried this youth, suddenly, as he noticed the water gradually rising around the rock, which served as an observatory to his superior, "the tide is coming in. The water will be half way up to your knees in a minute or two more."

Commandant Hervé turned with a distrait air, and looked vaguely at his little aid-de-camp, with the air of a man who is not quite sure that he is spoken to, then returned to his glass and his observations. The youthful aid-de-camp burst into a laugh.

"I tell you, Commandant," he continued, making a trumpet of his two hands; "I tell you that the tide is coming in very rapidly, and you will certainly be drowned—drowned, do you hear?"

The Commandant started like a man awakened from a sound sleep, looked around with considerable astonishment, and on seeing that his boots were already submerged to his ankles, leaped lightly on the beach, murmuring a gentle imprecation, the careful wording of which indicated the habits of good society, for a well-bred man differs from a pedant even in those passionate utterances elicited by the surprise of a moment. Then the young man, shutting up his spy-glass, began to walk along the beach, with a rapid step, apparently for no other end than to soothe his perturbed spirit.

The anxious soldiers lost not one movement of their *Chef*.

"I am sure," Colibri ventured to say, speaking loudly enough to be heard by Bruidoux without addressing him directly, "I am sure the Commandant regrets not having brought the whole battalion."

As Bruidoux continued to smoke with Oriental placidity, Colibri was emboldened.

"It must be," he said, "that the General was deceived in regard to the force of the enemy, otherwise he would have come himself with several batteries."

"Why not with the entire division, his staff and the band?" interrupted the sonorous voice of Sergeant Bruidoux. "Was it not advisable that the Republic itself should have marched hither, with all the sans culottes of France, for the preservation of the complexion of citizen Colibri? The General, did you say, you simpleton? What do you know about him? Has he taken you into his councils? Do you know anything of the duties of a common soldier? By no means, but my eyes are on you, young man, and as you do not seem to be endowed with any surplus courage, I wish to warn you that if you should chance to feel, when assailed in front, certain sharp pricks behind, you need not be surprised, for I know the man who intends to administer them if necessary."

Before Sergeant Bruidoux had time to read on the face of his subordinate the effect of his words, an exclamation from the group about him, caused him to look again at the sea. He saw with great astonishment that a boat had left the frigate, and was coming swiftly toward the shore.

"They have sent us a flag of truce," said the sergeant, "and most prudently, too. Will you kindly tell me, my good, eagle-eyed Colibri, what you can see in that boat?"

"Saving your presence, sir, I think I see a half dozen petticoats."

"Then," answered Bruidoux, "they are Scotch. I know all the armies of the civilized world, and only Scotchmen wear petticoats."

"Sergeant," asked Colibri, hastily, "do Scotchmen wear caps, too?"

"Caps," said Bruidoux, "I think not, you mean turbans, I fancy."

"There is certainly one cap among them, Sergeant. They may be Scotch women instead of men."

"Everything is possible," answered the Sergeant philosophically, "but if women are coming here, I am off!"

During this conversation, Commandant Hervé, seated on an overturned boat, was drawing with the scabbard of his sword, certain cabalistic figures, while his eyes had that far-away expression indicative of memories or hopes. A hand laid gently on his shoulder aroused him from his reverie, while at the same moment a clear, almost infantile voice said, behind him:

"This is a happy moment for you, Pelven?"

"Happy!" answered the young man smiling half sadly, "I am not so sure of that, Francis; I have lived long enough to know, that one is not safe in calling a

moment happy or unhappy, until it has quite passed away."

"But," returned Francis, looking at his friend affectionately, "does not that boat bring to your arms a dearly loved sister? Is not this the happiness for which you have been sighing for the last two years?"

"If I only knew," answered Pelven, "that I was to find in her the sister whom I remember, and for whom I am hoping. She has lived so long amid our enemies! She has learned from all around her, to hate the very uniform I wear."

"No, no!" cried the young aide-de-camp with an eagerness that covered his brow with a vivid color, "it is only necessary to look at her letters, Hervé, which you have allowed me to read, to feel that such a suspicion is unworthy of her."

"And then, too," continued Hervé, smiling at the enthusiasm of the youth, "my sister is not coming alone. She is accompanied by several persons, who I am very sure, have no love for me, and you can easily understand, Francis, that it must be to me, excessively painful, to see only hostility and coldness on faces once friendly and familiar."

"If it would not be indiscreet, Commandant Hervé, I should like to ask the number of ladies in that boat?"

"In a time when politeness is the rarest of jewels, Lieutenant Francis, it is impossible for me to refuse to satisfy a curiosity, expressed with such punctiliousness.

I shall say nothing of Mademoiselle Andréé de Pelvon, my sister, of whom I have already said too much, I fancy."

Francis colored again.

"But," continued the Commandant, "you have kindly forgiven the weakness of a brother. Beside this young lady, the boat you see a half league off, is honored by bringing to our shore Madame Elénore de Kergant, formerly a Canoness; she is sister to the Marquis de Kergant, my guardian, and is the bitterest of enemies to the French Republic, and the warmest friend to etiquette and savoir vivre. Behind this lady, at a respectful distance, you will see a young Bretonne who promises to be one of the loveliest creatures by whom the eyes of man were ever charmed. Her name is Alix, and she is the daughter of Citizen Kado — that tall Breton guide who leads the horses: look at him now! notice his long hair, his broad brimmed hat and full breeches, his coat a la Louis XIV. — you will see that he has an immense amount of beauty, and this beauty will give you an idea of that which characterizes his daughter. She has been brought up at the château, and lives there in a double position, she is not a *demoiselle*, nor yet is she a *femme de chambre*. Her hands are white, and Alix can read and write. At a still greater and more respectful distance you will see a waiting-maid. She is English or possibly Scotch, as her name is MacGregor, and numbers among her ancestors the chiefs of the clan, but has been reduced by mis-

fortune after misfortune, to this subordinate position. As the Canoness has only recently taken her into her service, I have never seen her, but if you want her portrait I can give it to you. She is tall, awkward, and red-haired, and takes snuff secretly! Are you satisfied, Francis?"

"Not yet, Commandant; for if my eyes do not deceive me, there are five women in the boat, and you have described but four."

"Ah! yes, to be sure," answered Hervé de Pelven, with an embarrassment which was not lost to his friend; "there is, or ought to be, for I cannot see at this distance, a certain Mademoiselle Bellah de Kergant, daughter of the Marquis, and niece of the Canoness. This name of Bellah has been in the family for a century or more."

"And is that all you have to say?" cried Francis, "not a word of praise, no epigram? Do you wish me to believe that the young lady is deformed, or is she so absolutely perfect, that your pencil does not venture to draw her portrait for me?"

"It is a delicate matter to attempt a description of our enemies," said Hervé, "and I regret that I am compelled to include Mademoiselle de Kergant among the most ardent adversaries of the cause which I sustain. She is my sister's friend—for years she regarded me as a brother, but of late she looks on me as a wretch, stained with the blood of his King, soiled by the dust of all broken and ruined relics."

A moment of silence followed these words uttered by the Commandant, in a voice vibrating with emotion: then he resumed:

“You will see her, Francis, and you shall tell me if ever a painter put upon canvas, a diviner face, one of more virginal purity, or one more clearly suggesting a martyr’s soul.”

Hervé again interrupted himself, and it was not until after he had turned away to conceal the workings of his face, that he added:

“It is a hard struggle sometimes, Francis, when the beliefs and the duties of the man, are ranged against the dearest sentiments of his youth.”

The young Commandant, as he finished these words, took a few hurried turns on the beach, while the Lieutenant stood motionless on the spot where he had received this semi-confidence, with misty eyes and his brow covered by a heavy cloud, foreign to the natural gayety of his face.

We will take advantage of the brief interval which still separated the English boat from the shore, to complete as briefly as possible, an explanation unfortunately indispensable to the humblest recitals.

Hervé and his sister, orphans from their earliest youth, had been bequeathed to the guardianship of the Marquis de Kergant, the old friend of their father, the Comte de Pelven. The Marquis had fulfilled, conscientiously and delicately, the promise he had made by the side of a dying bed. The two sad children had

found a home under the roof of the loyal gentleman, and a place at the side of Bellah, his only child; and had shared with her, all the advantages of a most careful education. When he had attained his seventeenth year, Hervé was sent to a school in Paris, which he left only to enter the military establishment of Brienne. At the close of each summer, the young man went to the château, where he spent several weeks, but while he went away, each year, with the same grateful respect and veneration for his guardian, and with the same love for the two charming sisters, who welcomed him with tears in their eyes, he had felt that new ideas and opinions, were fast taking the place of the principles with which his childhood had been nourished. The day that the Marquis learned the fatal result of the journey of King Louis XVI. to Varennes, he instantly foresaw the desperate efforts by which the Breton noblesse would demonstrate their devotion to their faith, and suddenly recalled his ward. Hervé obeyed the summons and repaired to Kergant. He lived there several months in great distress of mind, divided between the powerful claims of his heart and the deep convictions of his mind. Then he took his resolution and secretly departed for Paris. A little later, Monsieur de Kergant learned by a respectful letter, that the son of the Comte de Pelven, was serving as a volunteer in the army of the Republic.

From that day, although Mademoiselle de Pelven felt that the manner of her guardian toward herself

was more kind and thoughtful than ever, she never dared utter her brother's name, preferring that it should be forgotten, rather than insulted. The other inhabitants of the Château observed the same reserve, thus demonstrating their detestation of the part taken by Hervé, although this sentiment was graduated and influenced by the ideas and character of each. The Marquis regarded the son of his old friend, as a renegade and a felon—a traitor to God and to the King—who merited forgiveness neither in this world, nor the next. Madame de Kergant, the Canoness, pictured to herself her brother's young ward, bearing a head on a pike, she saw him hanging without ceremony, troublesome Royalists to the lamp posts. Bellah regarded him as a man born with the noblest qualities, who had yielded to temptation and drifted into crime; she felt such horror at this desertion and desecration of all her domestic altars, that never once did the proud child either dare, or wish, to mingle the name of the traitor in the most sacred murmurs of her prayers. Perhaps she hoped in her heart, that a merciful God would condescend to read this proscribed name in her sad and tearful eyes, which she raised to Heaven as she knelt. Hervé de Pelven arrived with his gun on his shoulder, at the army of the Moselle, just as General Hoche took the command. A gallant act of Hervé's promoted him almost immediately to the rank of Sergeant. Later, at Wissembourg, when his battalion fell back in disorder before the formidable artillery of an Austrian redoubt, he

threw himself alone upon the fascines with the tri-color in his hand, and stood there for a minute under the fusillade. The Republicans, animated by his audacity, were carried away by his example, and bore his dying body from among the corpses of his enemies. The General-in-Chief, a personal witness of Hervé's gallantry, wished the brave youth to take command of the battalion which he had saved, and made illustrious; but Hervé had not risen from his bed of suffering to which his wounds had consigned him, when General Hoche passed from his camp of victory to prison. Hervé lost more than a protector; the affection which Hoche had shown him, his disregard of the difference in their rank as well as their age, gave him a right to regret a friend, in the chief who had been carried away.

It was at this time that Pelven learned by a letter from London, that his sister Andréé, Mademoiselle Bellah de Kergant, and the Canoness, had emigrated to England, by order of the Marquis, but of the Marquis himself, Andréé's letter made no mention. Hervé had a painful explanation of this silence somewhat later, when he found the name of Monsieur de Kergant among those of the Royalists who made, in the west, so redoubtable a diversion. From that time the young officer received at intervals, letters from his sister; this mysterious correspondence weakened the confidence that the converted Aristocrat had first aroused in the Republican army. Notwithstanding the high military

qualities he continued to display, the vague suspicions which hung about him, retained him in the rank to which he had been first elevated, a rank which in those days of rapid fortunes, seemed unworthy of a young man of courage and merit. The ennui of this doubtful position threw a still heavier shadow over Hervé's character—he became a prey to the most invincible melancholy. The enthusiasm which had inspired and sustained his generous resolution, had passed away when the sacrifice was once accomplished, and there remained to Hervé, only the calm support of an elevated and firm conviction. Hervé realised the value of his sacrifice, only after its consummation. Then only did his sentiments, free from the tumult of his irresolution, appear in all their sincerity. He recalled the impression, made by Mademoiselle de Kergant, and understood her character well enough, to entertain no doubt as to the manner in which she looked upon his conduct; besides André's letters told him the truth. Not only did Bellah add no word of polite remembrance to her friend's letters, written to the man on whom she had looked for years as on a brother, but it was evident that André herself, was hampered by inflexible prohibitions. This inference Hervé drew from the reticence of the invariable postscript, "Bellah is well." Once, only, did André dare to exceed the limits of this cruel bulletin, and added—"She is beautiful as an angel." It would be difficult to say, why this feminine phrase irritated Hervé as it did, but at all events it was at

this time, that he began to fancy that the strong sentiment which the thought of Mademoiselle de Kergant awoke in his heart, was absolute hatred.

The 9th Thermidor restored General Hoche to his country. A little later he was called to the command at Brest, and recruited his forces from the corps detached from the army of the North. The sixteenth demi brigade in which Pelven served was the first of which Hoche took possession. Hervé found the young man whom we know under the name of Francis, regarded with great favor by the General. The mother of this youth had been in prison with the General, and had, before appearing before the terrible tribunal from which she never returned, commended her son to the Republican General. It may be, that he was actuated by a pious reverence for the wishes of a dying mother, or even that he was actuated by a tenderer sentiment, at all events the truth remains the same, that the General felt for this youth the warmest affection.

One winter's day in the year 1794, Hoche, coming up to headquarters with three battalions, was attacked on the shores of the Vilaine by Stofflet's command. From a small eminence, where he stood during the combat, he suddenly saw his young aid-de-camp borne away almost from his very side, by five or six partisans. At the same moment a Republican officer, dashed forward with his reins in his teeth, making his way through the group about the brave boy: snatching the prisoner by the collar of his coat, he drew him on to his saddle, and bore this living trophy to the foot of the

ill, amid the unbounded applause of the whole staff. By this chivalric deed, Hervé had strengthened the friendly interest which Hoche already felt in him, while Francis conceived for his preserver a passionate and enthusiastic enthusiasm.

Some weeks later, the first truce of La Vendée and Brittany was signed. Hervé then received a letter from his sister, who begged him to obtain permission for herself and her companions in exile, to return to France. She asked in addition that an escort of Republican soldiers should protect them as far as Kergant, against the Chouans, who were opposed to the present truce, and would take pleasure in avenging on them, the part which the Marquis had taken in this happy result. Notwithstanding the slight importance which he attached to this incomplete peace, Hoche saw no reason for supposing, that the appearance of two or three women could increase the dangers which Brittany was preparing for the Republic. The 9th of Thermidor had opened an era of clemency following the régime of terror. The Marquis de Kergant was among the Royalist chiefs pardoned by this amnesty, and Hoche did not hesitate to make this innocent concession to a man to whom he was personally a debtor, and whose character had inspired him with absolute confidence.

The reader now understands what had brought to the coast of Finisterre, the detachment of Republican soldiers whom we have been leaving to their own devices altogether too long.

The English boat touched the shore, coming in on the waves to a tiny sheltered bay among the rocks. Hervé and Francis hurried forward to assist in the embarkation, while the soldiers with manifest curiosity stood a little in the rear. Sergeant Bruidoux alone was unmoved, he lay on his back at some distance, protesting, by the lazy disdain of his position, against the scene which threatened to give the lie to his prophetic science.

When the boat was but a few feet from the shore, the rowers lifted their oars suddenly, and at the same moment the young midshipman in command, stood on one of the seats, and with a profound bow, said to Hervé, who carried his hand to his cap with punctilious courtesy: "If you, sir, are the person whom I suppose, you will not blame me if I ask your credentials, before I confide to your hands the sacred care with which I have been entrusted.

"But, sir," said a woman's voice eagerly, "it is my brother! I assure you, it is my brother!"

Hervé waved his hand gayly toward the beautiful creature who had just spoken, then taking a paper from his pocket, stuck it on the point of his sword, and presented it to the Midshipman, who at once proceeded to read it aloud.

"In virtue of the powers with which I have been empowered by the *Convention Nationale*, I give authority to enter and sojourn on the territory of the Republic, to the *citoyennes*, Eleonore Kergant, formerly a Canoness, to Bellah Kergant, and André

Pelven, minors, accompanied by the *citoyennes* Alix Kado, and MacGregor, their personal servants."

This paper was signed by General Hoche.

Madame Elénore listened to the reading of this paper, with many eloquent shrugs of the shoulders, which having finished, the Midshipman folded and presented to the old lady, and the boat was moored by the rocks. The Canoness was the first to step on shore, and then quickly turning, offered her hand in turn to each of her companions in exile. It might have been chance, or it might have been premeditated cruelty on the part of Madame de Kergant, at all events it was Andréé who was the last to land.

"My brother!" she cried, as she leaped into Hervé's arms with the tears streaming down her fair cheeks, "I see you at last! Ah! Heavens, what bliss! You look just as you did when we parted! Is it not strange, Bellah? I really expected to see his hair gray!"

"But, dear child," remonstrated Hervé, with a laugh, "it is only two years since we saw each other."

"Only!" repeated Andréé, "but I call two years a very long time!"

"Far too long, I admit, but hardly enough for a man to become decrepid!"

"So much the better, then," answered Andréé, with a charming little grimace, as with a delighted rippling laugh, she threw her arms once more around her brother's neck, and took his arm to walk to the village. The Canoness had promptly claimed Bellah's

support, fearing, apparently, that the Republican officer would have the audacity to offer his.

The Breton guide was seated upon a turned-over boat, holding his daughter's hands in his, and talking to her in the patois of his ancestors. The somewhat Jewish character of the girl's beauty, was heightened by the elegance of her national costume. Her noble, regular features, illuminated by superb black eyes, were framed by a Bretonne coiffe, the white wings of which were fastened to the top of her head. Nothing in the attitude of Alix, or in her way of moving, indicated that embarrassment which often makes the movements of women in her position in life, so excessively awkward.

Hervé could not refrain from admiring the splendor, with which the humblest of his companions had kept the promise of her youth, but her beauty bore no comparison to that of Bellah, which, nearly of the same type, was elevated by intellectual culture. She had the same dignity, with even greater distinction and ease of bearing. Bellah was, so to speak, the second effort of a sculptor, finished with more care than his first, and striving after perfection.

While Commandant Hervé continued to walk along the shore, listening with intense delight to the voice of his young sister, which brought with it, the memory of so many vanished joys, the young *a-d-de-camp* departed with slow, reluctant steps, his heart filled with that sadness inspired by some family fête, in which we have no part or parcel.

CHAPTER II.

GHOSTLY SIGHTS.

AT the order of their Commandant the soldiers had promptly fallen into line. The women mounted the horses standing ready for them, and took their places in the centre of the detachment, which left the village preceded by the guide Kado. Hervé following the directions of the General, was to avoid all inhabited places, and the small band soon found themselves following their tall guide over marshy meadows, or arid moors. Hervé, leaving his sister with regret, turned his horse toward that of the young aide-de-camp at the head of the detachment.

"Well, Francis," he said, "did I draw too vivid a picture of this first interview? And now that you have seen Mademoiselle de Kergant with your own eyes, what do you think of her?"

"She is very pleasant-looking, Commandant."

"Pleasant-looking, lieutenant Francis? You are certainly very cautious in your way of expressing yourself, and, pray, do you call the reception she accorded to me, pleasant also?"

"I cannot call it anything, for upon my word I did not see her speak to you; but your sister, Pelven—your charming sister——"

"My charming sister," interrupted Pelven, a little out of temper, "does not need to be defended, since she has not, so far as I am aware, been attacked."

Francis did not reply, but looked at Hervé, with an expression of surprise and reproach, which calmed the young man's excitement.

"Why the deuce," said Hervé with a laugh, "do you insist on talking of Andréé, when I speak of Bel-lah? Admit, can't you, that the beauty of Mademoiselle de Kergant is almost startling."

"Startling is a very good word," said Francis. "I picked up her whip a minute ago, and when she thanked me, she fixed her eyes on me so steadily that I assure you I turned cold, and shivered from head to foot. I wished to utter some polite common-place, but could find nothing to say. My words resolved themselves into a little gasp, and I assure you I am indignant with her for affecting me in such a way. Her beauty is wonderful indeed, but it astonishes more than it touches. How great is the difference now between her and——"

"And the Canoness," interrupted Hervé. "Yes, to be sure; the difference is indeed very remarkable. I congratulate you on having discovered it at this early date."

As the young man talked, they had ridden a little in advance of the escort, which at this moment was climbing a hill. The landscape directly before them, consisted of steep gullies through which ran swift torrents. The bright uniforms winding among the rocks

—the graceful feminine cavalcade with vails and white plumes floating in the wind—all this life and movement in this wild, deserted spot, presented a scene of picturesque interest to the two officers, as they turned in their saddles and looked back.

“Look, Pelven,” cried Francis, “don’t you feel like an enchanter, carrying off into captivity a queen dowager, and a bevy of princesses?”

“I am more enchanted than enchanter,” answered Hervé. “I must confess, Francis, that I don’t like this wild spot. I have precious little confidence in our guide, he is after his own fashion, and, according to his light, a very honest man, but as much of a Royalist as the Royal tiger himself. I beg you to watch him. Look, now—what is he doing at this very moment?”

The guide was following along the edge of the hill, and stopped every few moments to push off with his foot stone after stone, which rolled down into the terrible abyss of the valley below.

“But,” said Francis, “it seems to me that *citoyen* Kado is amusing himself in the most innocent fashion.”

“The apparent innocence of the amusement strikes me as being suspicious,” answered Hervé. “A man with so grave a face, and whose manners are so solemn, does not often indulge in such puerile plays. Watch him—he is listening, and now he is leaning over the precipice.”

“That is all right enough, surely. He is listening to the stones as they bound from rock to rock. It

seems to me that this uncultivated savage has simple tastes, and—”

“Hark!” interrupted Hervé. “Did you hear that?”

“Hear what?”

“There was a whistle, and I saw the guide exchange a look with the Canoness.”

“Yes, I did hear a whistle; or it might have been the wind through that group of trees. As for the exchange of glances, between that courtly dame and this savage, I must confess with regret, that it escaped my observation. But, really, Commandant, I do not share your apprehensions. Are we not protected by the presence of your sister? Does not she preclude the possibility of any plot, in which her brother would necessarily fall the first victim?”

“She might not know anything of it; and as I look again at that powdered head of the Canoness, I am convinced that no sanguinary idea ever found birth in it! Your opinion, my dear fellow, is not worth much on that point. I have no doubt that she has dabbled in politics during her sojourn in England, nor should I be in the least surprised, were I to discover, that she has had constant communication with Pitt.”

“Then I can only say that I am uncommonly sorry for Pitt!” answered Francis.

“Precisely! but among the ideas within that restless brain, what should you say if something like this had formed itself there to draw this escort of the Commandant into some snare, and then fix on him a

suspicion of complicity which would so hopelessly compromise him in the eyes of the Republic, that he would find himself, 'bon gré mal gré', involved with the Royalists."

"Hum! Hum!" murmured Francis. "You have presented a specious argument, but after all they could hardly expect, knowing Commandant Hervé as they do, to carry out such a plan."

"But passion and prejudice could blind them to such a point, that they might try to do me this injury. But after all, these notions of mine may be the merest nonsense, and I only wish to remind you, that we are, after all, in an enemy's country, and that it is advisable to keep our eyes open."

"Be easy, Commandant, I will watch the guide, the queen mother, and——"

"My charming sister?" asked Hervé in a low voice.

"No, Monsieur Pelven; no. I would as soon suspect a marble statue of innocence. I meant to say that I would watch that beautiful savage, the daughter of the guard."

André, now coming up to join her brother, put an end to the conversation between these two young men. it was now midday. The caravan was following a path, on either side of which, extended a desolate plain as far as the eye could reach. Clumps of tall broom, of the height of a man, broke the monotony of this Breton desert; here and there lay huge granite boulders covered with black lichens. In the centre of

the plain was a cluster of huts, but this indication of the presence of man, had nothing reassuring to the travelers, and only seemed to add to the desolation and impart an additional element of fear.

The caravan halted for a half hour in this sad oasis. Before the door of the hut nearest the road, was seated a young man, haggard, wild-eyed and in rags. He held up one hand and then the other, to the sunshine with an air of stupid enjoyment.

"It is my poor boy who has been afflicted by the *bon Dieu*," said an old woman coming out of the hut as Hervé approached. The young officer placed a piece of silver in her hand and quickly departed from this afflicting spectacle, but turning around some minutes later, he was surprised to see the poor idiot engaged in an animated conversation with the guide: he extended his arm towards the north, and was speaking with extreme volubility. Seeing that Hervé was watching him, he relapsed suddenly into his former attitude.

"It is a great pity, sir, isn't it?" asked Kado as he passed the young officer, who made no reply, but distrusting such an intelligent idiot, took care that no further communication should take place between the guide and himself.

The march was speedily resumed, and the hours passed on without any new incident taking place, which could confirm or strengthen Pelven's suspicions.

The sun was setting, and Francis, yielding to the peculiar charm of the hour, began to sing a little

impromptu ballad, in imitation of those of the days of chivalry, where each person of the party was mentioned. Hervé laughed heartily at this improvised epic, and at the character—at once heroic and burlesque—with which he was himself invested.

Stopping, however, suddenly, as he reached the daughter of the MacGregor—as he called the Scotch-woman—he said :

“Do you know that she seems to me the most discreet and quiet of Scotchwomen and maids! I am sorry to say, Commandant, that I see no resemblance to the caricature with which you favored me, as her portrait.”

“I told you, Francis, if you will remember, that I had never seen her; and if she continues to travel with her vail as closely drawn as now, it looks to me as if that pleasure would never be mine.”

“I have been more fortunate,” answered Francis, a treacherous gust of wind, showed me a lovely oval face and a double row of pearly teeth—as to her figure and the delicacy of her hands, you are as good a judge as myself.”

A few rods behind the two young officers Sergeant Bruidoux was, by way of enlivening the march, holding forth to Colibri.

“There are,” he said, “women of all kinds—some who are too stout, and others who are as thin as the scabbard of my sword. There are some who are fair, and some again who are dark. There are some who

have modesty and some who have none; and let me tell you for your benefit, Colibri, that those who have the most, are very often those who have the least."

This somewhat contradictory statement, made to astonish Colibri, produced the desired effect. He promptly asked how that could be.

"Suppose," said the Sergeant, loftily, "that you should chance to meet a woman in a wood who was totally naked, what would you think of her?"

This extraordinary question brought a vivid blush to Colibri's ingenuous countenance. He hesitated, and said shamefacedly:

"Bless me, Sergeant, I don't know! I should think—I suppose. Did you say in a wood, Sergeant?"

"Yes, in a wood. What would you think of her, I ask?"

"Well, I should take it for granted that she was none too good."

"Precisely!" answered Bruidoux. "Now let me tell you that I have seen in the woods of Canada, women who were no more clothed, than my nose is, at this precise minute. And yet I assure you, Colibri, that these creatures were better defended by their simple innocence, than they would have been by a hundred and twenty big cannon. I tell you this, my boy, to show you of how little consequence yards of dry goods may be at certain times. Now, as regards that Scottish citoyenne over there, I tell you that all her thousand and one wraps affect me to that degree, that if I had

not sworn fidelity to a certain lass, whose respectable name is transcribed on my left arm, I would offer my hand and heart to our Scotch travelling companion."

"Do you mean then, Sergeant," said Colibri, "notwithstanding her vails and all her *falbalas*, that she would not be offended by a proposal, made civilly and politely."

"I do mean just that, Colibri."

"And it would not be a hazardous step in your estimation?"

"Well, it has its perils certainly—*primo*, the Princess might give you a cut with her whip, and, *secundo*, it is quite within the bounds of possibility that the Commandant might stick his sabre through you. But these are mere trifles which should not deter you. When I was your age it took more than that to intimidate me. I remember in '85 there was a pretty creature named Loiza——"

Here Bruidoux was interrupted by a general disturbance in the column. It was now dark but very clear. The party had commenced the descent of the hillside. The narrow valley at the base, was swallowed up in the darkness, and was indicated only by the white mist rising from the marshes. A half league further on, the shadowy outline of a steep hill was seen against the sky, and upon the summit of this hill was a dark mass—the ruin of some feudal dwelling. Through two oval windows, streamed the pale moonlight, though the moon was not yet visible to our party.

Hervé and Francis drew up short, on beholding this strange effect, while the women, with a vague sentiment of terror, huddled close together, and nearer the officers.

"Is not that a scene, Mademoiselle," said Commandant Hervé, turning toward the Scotchwoman; "suggestive of your own native land?"

The girl inclined her head silently.

"But my dear brother," cried Andréé, "we surely shall not be obliged to spend the night in this melancholy spot?"

"You must remember that I did not deceive you in your itinerary," Hervé replied. "You must attack our honest friend Kado, if your sleeping-room fails you."

"I shall die of fright, my dear; that I know!" answered Andréé.

"I hope," said the Canoness, in her usual solemn manner, "that Mademoiselle de Pelven will shortly become reconciled to this old château, when she knows that it was built by her brave ancestors, and that it is the earliest patrimony of her family."

"Good!" cried Andréé. "I thank you from my very heart, for your expression. Brave ancestors is good, but I can only say that their descendant is a poor little coward, and that as I have all their portraits in my brain, I shall expect to see them all night long, filing past my bed, from big-footed Oliver, down to Geoffry of the tawny beard."

"And when you see them, my dear," interrupted a voice, whose calm, grave tones quickened the beat of Hervé's heart, "why should you fear them? You are their loyal descendant; you have never swerved from their faith; you have preserved the honor of their name, and the fidelity of their belief. No, Andréé, it is not for you to fear those, who lived and died for their God and their King."

The young Republican Commandant felt the blood mount to his face.

"If I know the history of my family," he said, in some agitation, "more than one, among those of whom Mademoiselle Kergant speaks, died in fighting against the King, for his country—the country of a Breton in those days was Brittany; to-day, it is France!"

As he finished these words, Hervé pushed his horse onward in the stony path which wound down the hill.

Francis, after giving orders to his men to resume their march rejoined his friend.

"You were right, Commandant, that girl is no ordinary creature; her voice has a ring in it, such as I never heard from any other woman in the world. I wonder that you were able to answer her; as for me, I should have ignominiously fled."

"She hates me," murmured Pelven, "she hates me, but what is infinitely worse, she despises me!"

"That she does not love you is quite possible, Commandant Hervé, but the contrary is possible also, as you will allow me to suggest. But look at our guide!

What on earth does he mean, by crossing himself in that frantic way on his arms?"

"I don't know; some Breton superstition, probably," answered Hervé; and going toward his guide, the Commandant heard him praying, and saw him raise his rosary to his lips. Astonished at this sudden access of devotion, the young man laid his hand gently on the guide's shoulder, who turned with a start.

"Excuse me, friend," said Pelven, "but this road is a difficult one, and we require all your assistance. The moment is not well selected for your prayers."

"It is not becoming in the sons of those who lie over there," answered the Breton, gravely, pointing to the château, "to say that it is not well to pray, when one comes through the valley of the Groac'h."

"You know, Kado, that I never lived in this country, and I know nothing of this valley, whose very name in fact, I hear for the first time."

"It is a bad thing, master," said the guard, with solemn emphasis, "when the bird wanders from the thicket where his father and mother sang, as they builded their nest."

"Kado," interrupted Hervé, with some austerity; "we have always been friends, do not compel me to forget this. I ask you now, if any especial danger appertains to this valley, that you make use of all your conjurations."

"This valley is haunted," said Kado, in a whisper, pressing his rosary fervently to his lips.

"Why didn't you take another road, then? Your fright was unnecessary."

"I am not afraid," answered the Breton. "I have come through this valley alone, and at midnight, more than once without fear. My conscience is clear, and the stones never dance before my eyes. Let me pray Monsieur Hervé, for I am not praying for myself."

"For whom then, Kado? For what terrible criminal are you so anxious?"

This question was uttered in a tone of anger, and of menace, but did not in the least disturb the serenity of the guide, who answered half sadly.

"I am praying, sir, for those who have learned to threaten those of this district, who have learned to threaten those, who held them when tiny children, on their knees."

This appeal to cherished memories, uttered by this well-known voice, brought down the haughty pride of the youth. He was touched by the reproach of this rude peasant, whose honest nature he thoroughly understood, although he had rebelled against the words uttered by Bellah.

"You are right, Kado," he said, "it is a disastrous season, when children of the same households, become as strangers, or as enemies. But whose fault is it? You are clear-headed and honest-hearted; and I am sure cannot believe that I have relinquished so much that is dear to me, without being drawn away by some new duty of which God has made a law for me."

"There are no new duties," answered Kado, sententially; "that which was right for your father, is right for you! The truth never changes."

"And yet," said Hervé, "I have heard you, yourself, tell how in early days, the people of Brittany prayed to the stones like Pagans."

"Yes, that is true, master."

"Well, this was truth to them. Then when the Christian religion was known, the first who renounced the false gods to follow the new law, were called infidels and traitors. To them were given the same names which to-day you give to me—and to them was said what you have just said, 'truth never changes,' and yet it has changed, as you must admit."

"The law of the Gospel is good," said the Breton, shaking his head; "'it never requires men to rob and kill their brothers!'"

"It requires them," answered Hervé, energetically, "to treat each other like children of the same blood, like creatures of the same day, and it is because there are men who have wilfully forgotten this law—who, believing themselves to be superior to their brothers, oppress and despise them, and make it necessary that the cause of Truth and Justice, should be fought for."

"If I understand you, master," said the guide, who had been listening with breathless attention to the words of the young officer, "these men who think themselves superior are the Seigneurs, the gentlemen, but all your ancestors were Seigneurs; do you intend to say, therefore, that your ancestors were all criminals?"

"My ancestors, good friend, believed themselves to be right, and lived up to their lights; but God Almighty has shown to us, that which He saw fit to veil from them. I should have been deeply culpable, therefore, had I consulted my interests, and adhered to the customs of my father, when their iniquity was shown to me. They did their duty and I do mine."

"I never thought of that," answered Kado, thoughtfully. Then he added after a moment's silence, "I am very ignorant, and I scarce know how to sign my name, but I have thought a good deal always, of what I heard talked of about me. Well, then, master, they say that you don't wish people to be great or humble, rich or poor, but desire all to be equal. Now I know very well that this cannot be, the good God has made the strong and the weak—to some people he has given brains, and to others, none—some persons are lazy, others industrious, how then, can you make them all alike?"

"We should be madmen, Kado, if we had any such notion. Far from dreaming of changing anything that God has made, we try so far as is possible, to follow His example in what we do. Does your religion tell you that God judges and condemns unborn children? No; it does not, you say. Very well, then. He places men on the earth with full liberty to do well, or to do ill, and he waits before condemning them, until they live out the life to which he called them. Just in the same way, does our Republic refuse to condemn a

man to despair, merely on account of his birth. The Republic allows all to exercise the gifts they have received from the Lord, and claim that all have an equal right to serve and honor the Republic."

"This sounds very reasonable," said the Breton, meditatively; "and more than reasonable, it sounds right; but it is not in the least what we have been told. I am obliged to you for talking to me. I knew you, Monsieur Hervé, when you were an infant. I taught you to pull the trigger of the first gun you handled—you were a brave little fellow! Swallows always fly away when the bad weather comes. I am glad to know that you had a better reason for deserting us, and my heart is less heavy now when I think of you."

Kado walked on in silence, sadly, and with drooping head.

"I am too old and that is the truth," he said, drearily. "If I were younger, I should like to think out what you have been saying; but at my age you see, master, if I should undertake to tear from my heart things and people, that have been there always, I am sure it would kill me. Now don't let us talk of it any more."

"Give me your hand, Kado," said Hervé, and he pressed, with warm cordiality, the hand trembling with emotion, extended by the old guard.

As he turned away, Hervé saw that his young Aid-de-Camp was close at his side.

"What was that you were saying, Kado," he asked, "about this valley of the Groac'h?"

"I said it was haunted, master."

"Haunted! What on earth does he mean?" asked Francis.

"It means, my dear boy, that old William, commonly called the Devil, holds his court in this valley, and that you will probably see in the moonlight crowds of fairies, and *korandons* who are just like human beings, except in size."

"Ah! this is delicious!" cried Francis, with a laugh.

A gesture and an exclamation from the guard, who suddenly stood still, checked the young man. The little party was two-thirds down the hill, and continued to wind slowly along the steep path, which was in fact, little more than a staircase hewn in the rock. Notwithstanding their confidence in their horses, who bred in this mountainous region, were as sure footed as the mules of the Spanish sierras, the women and even the soldiers, gave all their attention to the difficulties of the road, and preserved a profound silence. The exclamation uttered by the guide, and his abrupt halt, were heard therefore and commented upon, even by the last of the column.

Kado stopped as we have said, and listened with neck extended in the attitude of a man who is in momentary expectation of his ears confirming some terrible suspicion.

"What is it?" said Hervé, hastily.

"I was mistaken, for which I thank my Heavenly Father," answered Kado, "for although I have never seen the awful sight with my own eyes—"

The guide started and interrupted himself, shuddering from head to foot with horror.

"Alas!" he murmured, "I was not mistaken, it is they! Listen, master!"

Pelven, and all who followed, listened in their turn. They distinctly heard a sound of blows struck at regular intervals, resembling the sounds of a hammer. The noise seemed to come from several different points of the valley.

"What the deuce is that noise?" asked Francis; "one would think that a lot of laundresses were at work on their linen, by the side of a running stream."

"You are right, sir," said the guide, sadly, "they are beating the linen of the dead."

He uncovered his head, raised his eyes to Heaven, and began to pray in a low voice.

Hervé was in a most embarrassing position. He realized the necessity of cutting short a scene which might have a most disastrous effect on the spirits of the women, and even on the soldiers, but he was unwilling to say anything in the least rough to the man with whom he had just renewed the familiarity of his boyhood. Amid his hesitation, he felt a light touch on his arm.

"Brother," murmured André's flute-like voice, "you are going to scold me, but I assure you that I am frightened out of my wits. They are the *lavandières de nuit*, you know."

"I know nothing of the kind, goose!" answered

Hervé, with a laugh; then whispering in the guard's ear, he said, "Go on, my good Kado, don't frighten my sister by another word, I implore you."

Kado looked at the young man for a moment, as if in doubt, and then, with a long sigh, resumed his march, telling his beads as he walked. Hervé turned to the soldiers.

"Come on, boys!" he cried, gayly: "it seems that certain ci-devant laundresses are down there, but the Republic, you know, never recognizes any such people: en avant! en avant!"

"Commandant," answered Bruidoux, "Colibri wants to give them some more work, by sending them his six dozen of silk hose!"

Reassured in regard to the moral state of his men, by the laugh that greeted this sally, Commandant Hervé moved on with more composure. Meanwhile the sounds they had first heard from the valley became more and more distinct as they crossed the meadows, and became precisely like the peculiar beating of the wooden baton on wet linen; sometimes, too, they caught the sharp sound made by the baton, as it struck the uncovered stones.

"May I ask you, Commandant," said Francis, "what species of animal, is the one you call a *lavandières*?"

"*Lavandières*, Lieutenant, are diabolical women who, at midnight, wash the shrouds of the dead. It is said that they ask any one who passes to help them wring their linen. In this case, the only safety is to

comply with their request, but you must wring the same way they do, or you are lost."

"Ah!" said Francis, "I am infinitely obliged for your advice. I am in earnest however, and would really like to know, to what cause, you in your heart attribute this extraordinary noise. The fog is sweeping away, the moon is flooding the valley with its light, and I don't see the smallest indication of an habitation."

"That is true, but you only see the merest corner of the valley from this point, because of that mass of rocks which we must turn. A shepherd lad might easily make the noise by beating one stone with a stick, and then the echoes taking it up——"

"But, my dear Commandant," interrupted Francis, "twenty little shepherds could not make all that noise!"

"There may be some cascade there."

"No cascade ever sounded like that! It is really most extraordinary, and I begin to think I smell sulphur, don't you Commandant?"

"Our ears play us strange tricks at night," answered Hervé, replying rather to his own thoughts than to his companion. "Do you believe in ghosts, Francis?"

"I begin to do so, Commandant, and upon my life I don't like this!"

"Hush! Don't say so aloud at all events. I, too, was considerably disturbed, until I read the riddle. This valley has a wonderful echo, and the noise made by the hoofs of the horses, is repeated over and over again."

"Look there!" interrupted Francis. "Be they washerwomen or devils, there they are!"

The two officers had now reached the rocks which had hitherto concealed a large portion of the valley. Hervé turned to the point indicated by Francis, and was stupefied to perceive, at a hundred paces off, a group of women all in white. Some were stooping over the water, others were spreading linen on the scanty tufts of marsh grass. A cry of dismay and startled exclamations, told Hervé that both women and soldiers, had seen this strange sight.

"Here, Colibri!" cried Bruidoux, "now's the time for you to take your silk hose from your trunk."

"Hervé!" cried Andréé, throwing her arms around her brother, "In the name of Heaven, who are those?"

"Chouans, my dear! I was warned that we should find these gentlemen here. Stay where you are, and fear nothing."

As he uttered this pious falsehood, invented on the spur of the moment, in order to substitute a healthy fear for the supernatural terror, which had assailed the party, Hervé noticed that the Canoness started and turned a penetrating look upon him. This look once more aroused his suspicions. He hurried toward Francis, and said quickly,

"Look at the Canoness, she is not in the smallest degree disturbed, it is some snare."

"So much the better," replied the youth, drawing a long breath of relief, but as the young men turned

to look toward the valley, they saw that the white forms continued at their task, without showing any knowledge of the presence of the Republican detachment. The soldiers were evidently growing very uneasy.

"This must cease," murmured Hervé. "Boys—we must make them fold their linen! You, ladies, must remain behind these rocks, while my men make their charge."

The click of their fire-arms was heard, as the soldiers, headed by their officers, moved over the wet soil of the valley.

As they approached the white figures, it seemed to the soldiers that they increased in height and size until their proportions became positively supernatural. They were not now forty feet off, when all at once the strange apparitions formed a circle, and began to dance to the accompaniment of a low buzzing sound like that heard about a huge bee-hive.

Hervé cried "Halt!" Then addressing the phantoms, after a brief silence, he said, "I warn you, whomsoever you may be, that I do not wish to run the risk of one of my men being injured in this silly skirmish. Surrender or I fire!"

The *lavandières* continued their mysterious movements, quite undisturbed.

"Fire!" said Hervé.

As soon as the smoke was a little dissipated, and the soldiers were able to ascertain the result of the

discharge they shouted with laughter, for all the actors in this fantastic ballet lay motionless on the turf, like bales of cotton.

"That will teach them," muttered Bruidoux, "to dance their unholy dances by moonlight again."

Meanwhile Hervé ordered the guns to be reloaded, and led his men quickly on. All at once the whole of the figures started up and rushed across the plain with every indication of life.

"Come on, Francis," cried Hervé, pricking his spurs into his horse, "and you, my men, follow on!"

Unfortunately the soil was very heavy, and the horses stumbled over obstacles, which the phantoms were able to avoid, either through instinct, or by a knowledge of the locality. The soldiers, following with shouts and cries, imprecations and laughter, imparted a *sabbat*-like aspect to the haunted valley.

The *lavandières* having reached the extremity of the valley, began to climb the hill on which stood the feudal ruin. Hervé and Francis redoubled their efforts, and presently enjoyed the pleasure of hearing the feet of their horses sound on the harder soil of the hill. Pelven went a few steps beyond.

"Commandant," cried Francis, "wait for me!" And seeing that Hervé pushed on, without heeding him, he continued:

"Look out! You may fall into some trap! There may be a hundred Chouans up there!"

"If there are a thousand, and the devil himself at

their head," answered Hervé wrathfully, "I swear I will do my best to kill one!"

When the young Commandant reached the top of the hill, he uttered a cry of triumph at finding himself within a pistol shot of the *lavandières*. The fugitives, hotly pursued, fled with the greatest speed to the ruins, but Francis, foreseeing this manœuvre, had quietly taken measures to cut them off, so that the phantoms were between the two officers. Hervé saw them disappear behind a ruined wall, but to his great surprise did not see them again on the other side. Francis was dumbfounded. "They have hidden there," he cried. The two young officers spurred on their horses until they reached this isolated wall. Every trace of the *lavandières* had disappeared, they dismounted and kneeling on the ground, examined the soil, and turned over every stone, but could discover nothing which would explain to their satisfaction, the meaning of this strange occurrence.

CHAPTER III.

TREACHERY.

“UPON my life,” said Hervé, as he remounted, “I shall regret as long as I live, my inability to turn this comedy into a tragedy. But I can’t afford to risk the lives of my men, by making further attempts now. It is clear that these people have some issue which we cannot discover.”

“All right! Commandant, but how the Canoness must be laughing in her sleeve!”

“Let her laugh, our turn will come! Silence! I hear our men.”

The soldiers were running, all breathless and covered with mud. On seeing their officers, they uttered a shout of joy, and crowded around them with eager curiosity. Hervé told them that the Chouans had had time to disappear down the other side of the hill before he reached the plateau, and even went so far, as to point out a clump of trees where he said they were.

As the questions to which he was obliged to reply, began to embarrass him, he was relieved by the appearance of the women and the guide. Andréé threw herself into her brother’s arms, who soothed her with a repetition of the fable he had invented. Then leaving a sentinel at the wall, with directions to

watch the grove in the distance, he led the way to the château, his sister at his side.

"My child," said Hervé, snatching a moment when the Canoness could not hear him, "have you really any love in your heart for me?"

"Love for you? Hervé, my dear brother, what do you mean? You know I love you with my whole heart!"

"Thank you, dear Andréé, your words console me greatly, for I began to fear."

"Fear what?"

"That my sister, was an accomplice in some enterprise against my honor as a man and a soldier."

"Your honor, Hervé? Is not that a word, in regard to the meaning of which we might disagree?"

"Permit me to explain myself clearly," said Hervé, with some severity. "My honor consists, in serving unto death, the colors you see here—and it is my duty to inform you, Andréé, that any and every project intended to make me fall short of the aim I have set before me, will result in the confusion and destruction of those who conceive it."

"In Heaven's name, brother," said Andréé, looking at Hervé with that air of astonishment which is often a trick even with the youngest of women, "what suspicion can you have of me?"

"None of you, in particular, but the scene that has just taken place is not, I fancy, as inexplicable to the other ladies as yourself, and I fear that it is but the

prelude of other tricks less harmless, and this is the reason why I repeat to you, that I am incapable of preferring life, to the honor of dying with my soldiers."

Hearing these words, which so clearly revealed Hervé's apprehensions, the young girl uttered a profound sigh.

"Heaven be praised!" she said eagerly. "I know that neither you nor your men run any greater danger in this journey than we do!" and then placing her lips close to her brother's ear she murmured, "you know very well that there are two persons here who would not be likely to allow you to come to harm."

With this ingenious drop of opium in the ear of her suspicious brother, Andréé ran gayly on, until she reached the hall of the deserted manor.

The large irregularly built edifice, called by the peasantry, the "Château de la Groac'h," bore the imprint of the various ages which had passed over its head. The principal portion of the ruin, was of the imposing character of the twelfth century, other parts were older still, while one whole wing went no farther back, than to the last days of the Valois. This part of the building was still habitable, having windows and some few other indications of civilization.

It was here that Mademoiselle de Pelven joined Bellah and the Canoness. They were traversing the dilapidated rooms, guided by Kado, eager to select two which would afford them the most secure shelter for the night, then Kado served the ladies with the

provisions which they had themselves prepared in the last village they had come through. The meal was brief and silent. Andréé and Bellah speedily departed to the room assigned to them, the Canoness shared hers with Alix, and the Scotch woman took possession of a tiny oratory in a tower. Several camp beds had been sent on in advance, through Kado's thoughtfulness, he having been allowed to make all the practical arrangements of the expedition.

When Bellah and Andréé were alone in their great room, lighted only by one night taper, they sank on their knees as by one impulse, and began to pray. Andréé was the first to rise, and going to a window, she looked down with interest on the scene below. The soldiers had lighted fires here and there, and their light flashed at intervals through the mutilated ogives. On the turf slope in front of the manor, Commandant Hervé was walking alone; busy, probably, in turning over and over in his mind, with all a lover's anxious childishness, the last words uttered by his sister. Suddenly he stood still, and looked up to the window at which the young girl was standing. She drew back hastily and began to pace the room with evident agitation, twisting and knotting her handkerchief nervously, as she moved. As Bellah rose from her knees she noticed Andréé's flushed cheeks, and said anxiously.

"What is the matter, dear sister?"

Andréé made no reply, but thrust aside the detaining hand and continued her troubled walk.

“Are you displeased with me?” said Bellah, “and for what?”

“Listen,” said Andréé, stopping short and coming up to her, “this cannot last. I can not sleep a wink to-night.”

“Are you really as much afraid as all that? But sweet one, am I not with you? Your noble ancestors would take no pleasure in terrifying us. Besides, we have a light that will burn all night, and spirits you know——”

“Spirits! What do I care for them!” returned Andréé, with a little snap of her fingers. “I am not in the least afraid of my ancestors, nor do I care a sou about them. I only wish I had never had any!”

At this impulsive reply, Mademoiselle de Kergant raised her eyes to Heaven with a supplicating expression quite usual with her, and then said: “But in that case, why should you not sleep, and allow me to do the same?”

“I don’t know,” answered Andréé.

Mademoiselle Kergant sighed, gave a slight shrug of her shoulders, and answered gently,

“Nor do I, my dear!”

“Your aunt is an old dragon!” cried Andréé.

“My dear sister!”

“And you are another, Bellah!”

“Upon my word,” said Mademoiselle de Kergant, again raising her eyes to Heaven, with an expression quite worthy of herself.

Andréé lost all patience.

"You never once thought," she cried, "of inviting my brother to breakfast with his sister! No, you left him at the door, as if he had been a dog, my poor, dear boy! How mistaken we were! I really expected no better from your aunt, but from you—! when you know, too, how Hervé loves you."

The passionate child hesitated a little, as she uttered the last two words and turned away as if afraid to meet the eyes of her companion.

"I know," said Bellah, slowly, and with infinite pathos in her voice, "that Hervé, is the brother of the dearest and truest friend I have in the world, and it is because I know this, Andréé, that I have done violence to my sentiments, and have not received him as a stranger, although I knew him to be an apostate, unworthy the name he bears!"

"Precisely!" cried Andréé, "and you would forget the ten years of affection in this way! Let me pass! The apostate shall know, that he is not the only traitor here. Let me pass, I say!"

"Andréé," answered Mademoiselle de Kergant, "you surely will not do that?"

"Certainly I will," Andréé replied with compressed lips, "you have made me blush for my brother—you shall blush before him."

Bellah snatched Andréé's robe in terror, and falling almost on her knees before her:

"In heaven's name, dear Andréé, do not go to him now! Wait and think."

“No, no. You have been pitiless; I will be so in my turn,” answered the girl, half wildly. “Let me go, I say!”

She rushed to the door. Bellah rose to her feet, and stood motionless; she was white and cold as marble; her eyes flashed fire, and her nostrils dilated. She raised her right hand, with a truly royal gesture, and in a tone of great solemnity, said:

“Andréé de Pelven, is this the hospitality which you offer us under your ancestral roof? This place, thanks to you, will indeed be accursed after this. But since you are in earnest, and this misfortune is unavoidable, I will spare your lips the shame of this confession, and you will see if I blush in calling martyrdom upon my head!”

The young enthusiast, with lips still trembling, advanced with dignity, toward the door, against which Andréé was standing, with dilated eyes. As Bellah touched her to move her gently aside, the poor child shivered from head to foot, turned deadly pale and glided slowly to the ground. Bellah dropped on her knees, lifted her friend's head in her arms, and as she covered with kisses, the brow and hair of the fragile creature, murmured:

“Holy virgin! what have I done? Andréé! Sweet sister! Ah! help her, dear Heaven! Poor child—it is Bellah—nothing has happened. Look up, sweet. I will do just as you wish, only speak to me, little sister!”

André returned slowly to life, under this rain of caresses. She opened her eyes, smiled like a child awakening from sleep, and said faintly:

"Admit that you love him a little!"

"She is still dreaming," murmured Bellah. "You feel better, dear, do you not?"

"Yes; I feel better if you love him—but I am very much worse, if you do not love him," answered André.

"Good Heavens!" murmured Bellah.

"Your heaven will be his heaven—your will his law, whenever you say the word." Then suddenly throwing her arms around her friend's neck, André cried:

"Listen to me! I don't ask you to shout to him from the window, 'Commandant, I adore you!' but you owe him something, after all he has suffered. You must give him something—what shall it be?"

"Nothing at all."

"Ah, I have it!" and the girl snatched the white feather from Bellah's hat; "what a triumph it will be, *ma belle*, to compel a Republican officer to wear the colors of the King."

This adroit compromise was not much to the taste of Mademoiselle de Kergant. She darted forward to take possession of the feather, which her adopted sister was about to put to such treacherous use, but André, always quicker in her movements, than her friend, had already opened the window, and Bellah reached her side just in time to add, by her presence, a more precious significance to the token, now fluttering over Com

mandant Hervé's head. Andréé laughed in gay delight, while Mademoiselle de Kergant withdrew precipitately from the window, and shrugged her shoulders with an air of offended dignity.

It seemed as if the dainty projectile, falling to the feet of the Commandant, was endowed with some fairy power, for the young man, on seeing it, seemed to have taken root, and stood motionless. He felt that he was being watched from the window, and was in a most uncomfortable state of mind, as he dared not leave the feather where it had fallen, nor yet did he dare to pick it up. If he did so with the eagerness of a lover, he felt that he would be mercilessly ridiculed, as it was more than likely, to be some freak of Andréé's. If, on the contrary, he turned away indifferently, did he not run the risk of gravely offending her, from whom this discreet message came, as he in the bottom of his heart fondly hoped. Tossed between these conflicting doubts and impulses, Hervé finally resolved on a medium course. He stooped and picked up the little feather delicately and slowly, with the tips of his fingers, not with the smallest eagerness, but with the air of a man, who has found something that has awakened his curiosity. He then walked on examining his *trouvaille*, with a certain nonchalance, as if he were saying to himself: "The deuce take it! Is'this an ostrich plume? Is it common to find them in this part of the world?"

But as soon as the young man found himself shel-

tered behind a wall from all curious eyes, his countenance changed, and he eagerly pressed the plume to his lips. Then with a smile at his own weakness, he tore open a button in his uniform, and folding the feather, laid it away as a relic against his heart. After hiding his treasure, with a guilty expression on his face, the young Commandant, seeing that repose and silence appeared to reign in the room occupied by the young ladies, as well as in all other parts of the ruin, now went toward the steps, to seek the wide hall in which Francis had found shelter. On the upper steps Hervé turned, and, as a last cautionary measure, looked toward the isolated bit of wall, behind which the *lavandières* had disappeared in so extraordinary a way. Hervé had himself selected the soldier, who was to replace the first sentinel. This was a young grenadier named Robert, whose courage and intelligence he thoroughly knew. Robert was not at his post, but just where he should have stood, he saw something white fluttering, as if some one was anxious to attract his attention.

Hervé hastily descended the steps, and went toward the wall. When he was not more than ten feet off, he distinguished the sentinel, who at once removed the handkerchief which he had placed at the end of his bayonet, and contented himself with a gesture of the hand, which implied an entreaty for greater haste, and absolute caution.

Two seconds later, Hervé was close to the wall and face to face with the soldier.

"Well, Robert," he said, in a low voice, after a hasty glance around to see that there was no danger of being overheard, "what is the matter?"

"Just this, Commandant," answered the soldier, in a low whisper; "you are betrayed!"

"Betrayed! And how! By whom? Speak!" cried Hervé.

"Hush! Commandant—speak low. This is all I know: I was walking up and down peaceably enough, with my eyes on that little grove over there, when suddenly I heard, behind me or under me, I couldn't say which, a great clamor of voices. I like to know all that is going on, you know, so I looked about a little, and finally——"

The soldier stopped, a look of terror passed over his face, and Hervé saw him stagger and fall heavily to the ground. At the same moment he heard a shot, and felt a blow on his head, and he, too, fell by the side of the sentry.

Then a tall, athletic man, who had committed this double act of violence, with such cruel success, left the shelter of the wall, from whence he seemed to have emerged, and examined the château with curious eyes. At the same moment an individual of more delicate proportions leaned over the inanimate body of the Republican Commandant, and examined the wound on his head,

"He is not seriously hurt," he said, in a singularly rich, sweet voice.

"The shot has been heard, and they will all be here in a moment," answered the other. "We had better be off."

As he uttered these words, he, followed by his companion, passed through an opening at the base of the wall, which at once closed upon them, and left not the smallest clue.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CANONESS SUSPECTED.

AT the noise of the report, all the soldiers, guided by Francis, rushed toward the place whence this signal of alarm had come. The young Lieutenant uttered an agonized exclamation, on seeing the inanimate body of his friend; but his despair was calmed when, by the light of a torch, he failed to discover any wound.

"The hand that struck that blow was a stalwart one," said Bruidoux, examining the Commandant's hat, which bore the marks of a tremendous concussion. "We ought to be thankful, that he, whoever he was, spared the life of our Commandant, and did not shed his blood."

"But, sir, I am not sure that he has done so; I don't know what this is under my feet, but——"

"Good heavens!" cried Francis, dropping on his knees by Hervé's side, "can it be possible. This is horrible!"

"Horrible, indeed," answered Bruidoux, in a scared sort of way; "but the wounded man, or rather the dead man, lies here. Yes; he has mounted guard for the last time, poor fellow."

As he spoke, the Sergeant, aided by the soldiers,

ried to lift Robert's body, which had been partially concealed by a pile of stones near which it lay.

"Dead! Are you sure he is dead, Bruidoux? Is there really nothing we can do?"

"Nothing, except pray for him. The ball has chosen the best place, like a true aristocrat, and has lodged in his heart. It is a pity," continued Bruidoux, addressing the soldiers, "that a tiny bit of lead, fired by a miserable coward, can wipe a brave man off the face of the earth! I would give my left eye, for a brief interview with the *lavandière* who pulled that trigger. But, citizens, this will never do; our old comrade must not be left lying here. He must have his six foot bed, just as much as if he had been born a peer and a duke, under the ancient régime. I loved this boy, my children! He was a brave fellow. He hadn't the stuff in him, any more than myself, for a general in chief, but around our camp fire, and as we stood in a line in front of the enemy, he was invaluable. Hem! hem! Citizens, a tear may fall on a gray moustache, without dishonoring it, I am sure. Poor Robert!" and Bruidoux passed his sleeve over his eyes.

The solemnity of the place and the hour, the presence of the body, to whose features the torchlight imparted a fantastic semblance of life, and the respect the soldiers felt for the orator, imparted great effect to this funeral oration. The grenadiers around Bruidoux, gave little nods of satisfaction, as if to say that no soldier could desire a warmer champion than their old Sergeant.

All this time Francis was doing his best to recall his friend to life, but Hervé was not yet able to reply to the young lieutenant's eager questions.

Several of the men, now proceeded to dig with their swords a grave, in which they placed the remains of their dead comrade. Others, making a litter of their guns, started to bear the Commandant to the château. They had gone a little more than half way, when another shot caused them to stop. Hervé tried to rise, but fell back exhausted by the effort. Francis, leaving two soldiers with the litter, dashed with the rest of the men in the direction of the *donjon*, whence came to all appearance, the sound of the report.

The sentinel placed at this corner of the ruin, was found at his post reloading his gun. Questioned by Francis as to why he had fired, he stated that he had seen a procession of black and white phantoms emerge from the base of the acclivity on which the *donjon* stood. That after he had called out, "Who goes there?" and had received no reply, he fired; and here the soldier showed considerable emotion, as he said: "The earth seemed to open and swallow them, for they all disappeared at once." A thick fog rising from a stream running at the foot of the hill, was to Francis a natural explanation of this new disappearance of their enemies. He could not restrain an exclamation of angry disappointment; then with a command to the sentinel, not to relax his vigilance for one single moment, he ran back to the Commandant,

who by this time had recovered, and came to meet him. The two young men exchanged accounts of what had taken place, after bidding their men return to their rest.

"I am quite sure," said Hervé, "that my sister knows nothing of all this; for she assured me this very evening, that so far as she knew, we were in no sort of danger, and she is incapable of a falsehood. I am inclined to believe, that we have merely fallen upon a band of Chouans in retreat, and that we have interfered with them. But of course we can't pursue them in this fog."

"Did you gather from Robert, that there was some understanding between these travellers, and the mysterious enemies?"

"He did not say so precisely—not in so many words, but he implied it. I have no confidence myself in the Canoness, but my sister must be herself deceived."

"I would swear to that!" cried Francis.

"I must try and sleep," said Hervé. "My head gives me a good deal of pain, and I feel the need of repose."

The two young men separated, after agreeing to conceal from the women, including Andréé, all the events of the night, from a natural unwillingness to give some of the party, a chance to triumph, and to spare Andréé anxiety.

As Francis, after leaving the Commandant, passed the front of the house, he noticed with surprise the

absolute calm which continued to reign there. That the shots and the subsequent uproar had not awakened the young girls, was one of the sweet privileges of their age; but neither the Canoness nor Kado could claim so agreeable an excuse. This silence and imperturbability, confirmed the vague suspicions of the young Lieutenant, and inspired him with an idea of vengeance which delighted him as much as if he had been a school-boy. He stooped and picked up a handful of stones, and satisfying himself that no one was watching him, he hurled these stones into the window of the Canoness, after which he hid himself behind a wall, laughing softly.

At the sound of the broken glass several soldiers, scattered here and there, lifted their heads anxiously, but the profound silence that ensued, caused them to regard the sounds as one of the strange disturbances of the evening, and they soon relapsed into silence and slumber.

At the same moment, Francis saw a shadow cautiously approach the window, and recognized the sharp features of the Canoness. Francis, pitiless as is youth, usually, stooped for another stone, but the old lady, guided by some guardian angel, withdrew, and the second missile was not thrown.

About three hours later, all the soldiers were moving about, swinging their benumbed arms, and stamping their chilled feet on the ground. Kado was saddling the horses with his customary gravity, while Hervé and

Francis, a little apart, were engaged in some serious discussion. Sergeant Bruidoux took his pipe from his mouth, and respectfully approached the young officers. He touched his finger to his hat.

"Liberty and Fraternity, citizens!" he said. "You look as fresh as a lark this morning, Commandant. I am delighted to find that you have suffered no inconvenience from that terrible blow. Now, citizens, do you think it advisable, that we should leave this place without finding out its secrets?"

"That is just what I was saying to the Lieutenant," Hervé replied. "I think we ought, now that we have daylight in our favor, hunt up the mystery of our *lavandières*."

"I am willing," cried Francis, "only we must keep together. You must not run the risk again of being taken in a snare."

"But why the deuce do you talk about a snare?" answered Hervé. "Haven't they left the door wide open at the base of the *donjon*. If it be a snare, it is a most daring one." Light a torch for me, Bruidoux. I do not choose, Lieutenant, that one of the men shall risk a hair in this affair. It is enough, more than enough, that it has cost Robert's death.

"Permit me, citizens, to make a suggestion," said Bruidoux, returning with a lighted torch in one hand and two others under his arm. "Let us three go together."

Hervé, notwithstanding his strong desire to visit this

subterranean retreat alone, yielded to this arrangement. The three then passing the *donjon* descended with difficulty, the abrupt cliff which formed its base, assisting themselves by the stunted trees growing here and there between the rocks; they soon reached a little door at the foot of the ravine, seen from above by Commandant Hervé, but which was arranged in such a way, that it could not be detected from any other position. This door gave access to a narrow, dark cavern. Hervé, a torch in his hand, entered first, stooping as he did so, and was closely followed by his two companions. At the end of a few feet, this narrow passage opened into a large vaulted chamber, to which arches, still perfect, imparted a character of sombre magnificence. Torches lay smoking on the damp soil, and were the only indication, that human beings had been recently near the spot. The principal cave communicated by archways with smaller rooms, through all of which, the two young men and the Sergeant, continued their search. Hervé turned his attention more particularly to the portion of this subterranean place, which corresponded with that wing of the manor which had been occupied by the Canoness during the night. In the corner of a smaller cavern, the red light of his torch suddenly fell on a staircase, which he hastily climbed, but on arriving at the top he found that the last five or six stairs had been broken away, and lay piled on the lower steps, thus leaving a space which it was impossible for him to surmount.

After a minute examination of the debris, Hervé became convinced that they dated only from the night, and his suspicions of the politic Canoness, were strengthened by this discovery. A visit to the apartment occupied by the old lady, would have settled the point in question, but his education had been such, that it would have been impossible for him to be guilty of such an intrusion.

Hervé joined the young aide-de-camp just as the youth had his hand on an enormous bolt fastening a low, wide door. The united efforts of the two young men were required before the bolt would move. At last the door dropped like a draw-bridge, and daylight poured into the cave. They at once recognized the fact, that chance had led them to the mysterious opening which the evening before had swallowed up the *lavandières* in such an apropos manner, and which, later, had given egress to Robert's murderer. The door was formed of oak planks, covered within with iron plates, and disguised outside with light masonry, which made it look precisely like the rest of the wall. The young men profited by this door, to leave the cave, but as they placed their feet on terra firma, they heard loud shouts from the cavern, and, rushing backward, they met Bruidoux, dragging by the ear a captive of a most unexpected species.

Hearing the shouts of the old Sergeant, the soldiers, Kado, and the valiant group of emigreés all ran toward the wall; the prisoner, amid this curious circle, stood

rubbing his eyes, as if dazzled by the sudden sunlight. He was a child, certainly not more than ten years of age, with blue eyes and a gentle charming face. His black hair—cut square across his brow—lay on his shoulders behind; he wore a long coat of some brown, woolen material, and puffed breeches.

At the first glance, Hervé recognized this child, and then turned a reproachful look on Kado, to which the guide replied, by an almost imperceptible sign, expressing volumes of regret and pain. The women, at the same time, exchanged stealthy glances of fear and confusion.

“This boy, Commandant, belongs to the *lavandières* of course. His mamma must have forgotten him. I spoke to him with all the politeness in the world, but the fellow seemed to be a stranger to the manners and customs of a *salôn*, and was as mute as a fish.” While the Sergeant was speaking, the child was looking around with astonished eyes, then folding his arms behind his back, he said, with a naïveté, most perfectly acted, if it were not sincere: “Oh! what fine gentlemen and what beautiful ladies! Good morning all! What are such people as you, doing in this wild country?”

“What are you doing here yourself, you rascal?” cried Bruidoux; “upon my life I should not be surprised if you asked us for our papers!”

The last doubts that Hervé had cherished as to the duplicity with which he was treated, vanished at the sight

of the well-known features of this child, but he was so touched by the anguish he read on Kado's pale contracted features, that he was deterred from profiting by his discovery.

"My little friend," he said to the child, "you are too intelligent looking, to play with any success, the part you have adopted. You are not under witted, as you would have us believe, and you had best tell us the truth without reservation, or your tender years will not save you from the punishment you deserve. You have passed the night with people, whom we have more than one reason for regarding as enemies."

"I should say so," muttered Bruidoux, "when a fist like——"

"Silence, Sergeant," said Hervé. "Come now, my child, who brought you here?"

"It was La Groac'h," said the boy, "La Groac'h of the valley."

"La Groac'h," interrupted Bruidoux, "was it La Groac'h that drew the trigger?"

"Citizen Sergeant," said Hervé with considerable energy, "let us not pursue this farce, it is a mere waste of time. Search him at once. This child has been sacrificed by older persons, and shall pay the penalty of their crimes."

"Go ahead," said the boy, laughing, "the Fairy will look out for me. Between ourselves, gentlemen, I will confess to you that she is my wife."

"And this was her wedding present I presume," said

Bruidoux grimly, as he took from the pocket of the youthful prisoner, a top and ball of cord. "You would have shown more sense, my lad, had you contented yourself with this amusement, which, as you know, citizens, is not a potentate's diversion, but a joy to the masses."

As he talked the old Sergeant wound the cord evenly about the top, and then launched it on the ground, watching its evolutions with a paternal smile.

The women, in the meanwhile, were preparing to mount their horses. Kado went toward the Commandant, and as he arranged the stirrup Hervé leaned toward him and whispered :

"You are well punished, Kado, for deceiving me, and I am equally so, for having believed in you."

Kado started, and answered with eyes cast on the ground :

"Yes, sir, I know, you have been kind to the boy. Shall you take the poor little fellow with you?"

"If I did my duty, Kado, I should take the father with the son."

"The child is far from strong, master. I like to look at him, for his dead mother and he, are exactly alike. Some people think Alix like me, but the boy is his mother's breathing image. He is very delicate, Master, and can't stand a prison, sir."

Kado's voice broke, he carried his hand to his throat as if suffocating.

"Kado," said Hervé, "I have allowed myself to be influenced by feelings and recollections, to which you,

apparently, have attached little importance. Can you, and will you, confess all, before these men? That is, will you make a full confession?"

The Breton, after looking around him with sad indecision, raised one hand to Heaven, and said in a firm tone:

"The child is in the hands of God."

"Forward! March!" cried Hervé.

"Commandant," said Bruidoux, leading the boy by the collar, "what am I to do with this boy? He is as spry as a monkey, and will be off like the wind, in search of his wife."

"He is in your charge, Sergeant, you are responsible for him."

"In that case, come here my boy!" said Bruidoux, drawing forth a long rope from his coat pocket. One end he passed around his own waist, the other he attached to that of his young captive, and in that style, overtook the detachment as it wound down the hill amid the morning mists.

CHAPTER V.

THE WHITE FEATHER.

DOES not the terrible burthen of life seem somewhat easy to carry, when, under a blue and cloudless sky, one rides along, past freshly blooming hedges, drinking in the delicious air? In such brief moments one realizes the delight of living, and is grateful for having been born. But does a man overtake you, who talks of politics and elections, the charm is broken!

These sensations were depicted on the faces of our travellers. Hervé, and the old guide, alone looked anxious and careworn. Hervé rode in front questioning his conscience. After all that had passed, he no longer entertained a doubt as to the nature of the perfidy by which he had suffered. It was clearly his duty to refuse further protection to persons who could so take advantage of him. Each onward step made him an accomplice in a treason, the nature of which he was still ignorant, certain as he was of its existence. How could he ever interrogate with the severity of a judge and an enemy, these women to whom he was allied by such cherished recollections—no! this task was far beyond his strength. To do this, were also to open the eyes of his men to a duplicity which had cost

one of their comrades his life. It was to abandon these emigreés to the rigor of the law. Andréé, too, would be involved in the consequent perils, and he would therefore be endangering his own sister. Hervé, notwithstanding his stern principles, was not quite enough of a stoic, to burthen his soul with an act which political enthusiasm might laud, but which every man would stigmatize as infamous in his heart. To escape these anxieties, Hervé decided on continuing the journey as far as Kergant, without bringing up the subject, but determined, also, that on his arrival there, he would lay all the details before his General. Relieved by this determination, Hervé was at last able to think once more of the feather which the wind had brought to his feet from Mademoiselle de Kergant's window. He had puzzled his brain to discover its meaning. He was certain that the plume belonged to Bellah, as a swift glance at the young lady's elegant hat, showed him that it had lost its crowning decoration. This conviction was at first decisive, but presently he discovered, to his discomfiture, that Andréé's hat was also without its feather, and this again involved the point in doubt.

Andréé, who had noticed this cursory examination on the part of her brother, wheeled her horse around until she rode close at his side.

"Is not this morning delicious?" she cried, "but what a singular hat it pleases you to wear, Commandant!" At these words, Hervé, who was not altogether

satisfied with his little sister, began to whistle and touched his spur to his horse, but Andréé was not the woman to accept this as a reply.

"Commandant," she repeated, "you have a most singular hat."

"And in what respect is it singular?" asked Hervé, seeing that he must answer.

"It is so flat! Why do you not put a plume in it?"

The word plume was precisely the one of all others which at that moment hovered on Hervé's lips.

"Plume," he repeated, mechanically, in a half whisper.

"Plume!" cried Andréé in high delight.

"How did you sleep last night?" asked Hervé.

"Not badly, Commandant, or rather, it would not have been a bad night, had I not been bothered by a persistent dream, all about a plume!"

"By the way, child," said her brother, "what have you done with your own?"

"Bless me! Is it not in my hat? No, I remember the wind bore it away last night."

"And was the wind equally courteous to your friend?"

"Ah!" cried the girl, with a gay laugh. "I have you now. No, the wind carried off but one, and you must guess which. This, citizen, is precisely what I have sworn not to disclose, because were I to tell you, Commandant, you would be too happy!"

And Andréé, as she finished this sentence, rushed like the wind, back to her companions.

Commandant Hervé, now abandoned himself to happy visions, and Lieutenant Francis, studied the charming sister of his friend, from out the corner of his eyes. So great was the interest of the youth in this new study, that Mademoiselle Pelven would have discovered it, even if her powers of observation had been limited. Women easily make these discoveries, and if the observer, may be classed among the enemies of the observed, the lady's enjoyment of her conquest, is greatly heightened. The graceful, slender figure of the young Lieutenant, his dashing, impulsive movements, the care with which the delicate moustache was trimmed, and his débonnaire way of placing his hat a little on one side, gave him a jaunty, page-like aspect, that was very taking. Mademoiselle Andréé like most young girls feeling themselves to be regarded with especial attention, was more than usually silent and quiet for a time, but all at once she seemed to be taken possession of, by a very demon of loquacity.

Francis in the meantime had arrived at the conclusion that it was time for him to declare his sentiments. He spurred on his horse, passed and repassed Hervé as if exercising his steed, and finally disappeared from view for some ten minutes. He came back at full gallop, concealing a bouquet of the wild flowers, over which he had heard Andréé go into ecstasies, a few minutes before. Fortunately, Andréé was at this time, some

little distance in front of the Canoness ; Francis drew in his reins as he reached the girl's side.

"Mademoiselle," he said, as he presented his bouquet, "your brother sends you this."

The falsehood was apparent, and if Andréé had time to realize this, the young man was lost ; but the wonderful temerity, not unusual to lovers of the age of Francis, often enables them to profit by the surprise occasioned by their audacity. Andréé hardly knowing what she did, took the flowers with confused thanks.

It may readily be imagined by my readers, that this was a scene which the Canoness could not contemplate with careless eyes. She trotted on to join the young lady, the perfumed powder flying from her hair in little clouds : fixing her eyes on Andréé's troubled face, she said in a voice that indicated a tempest in the air :

"May I ask what song this patriotic troubadour is singing in your ear?"

"He was entreating me, Madame," answered Andréé, "to offer you this bouquet, as he had not the courage to do so for himself, so impressed is he by the dignity—yes, dignity—that was the word—of your face."

During these words, the flowers had passed from Andréé's dainty, rose-tipped fingers, to the withered hand of the Canoness. Francis drove his spurs into his horse, which reared violently, and came very near throwing him.

"Young man!" called the old lady. "Bless me, how am I to accost such people. My friend! Lieutenant!"

"Say, Citizen, Madame," murmured Andréé.

"Citizen!" cried the Canoness, then seeing as the officer came nearer, how singularly handsome he was, she said, less authoritatively.

"My child, where did you learn such respect for women?"

"From my mother," answered Francis.

"That was well said," replied the Canoness, "and I shall keep your bouquet. You wandered early from the right path, my poor boy."

"Not so, Madame, for I had the honor of meeting you."

"This is really very extraordinary!" replied the old lady. "How happens it that a young man, so well born as you seem to have been, should have found himself among these sanguinary ruffians?"

"Of the National Convention!" interrupted Francis.

"Because, Madame, I love fighting, and surely, it is more natural for me to like to fight for my own country than for any other."

"Unhappy boy!" cried the Canoness; "your judgment has been perverted by grand words, before you were old enough to understand their sense. But with your mother, how was it with her? you spoke of her—

"Yes, I spoke of her, but with your permission, we will say no more about her," answered Francis, hastily.

As he spoke he drooped his eyelids, as waxen and heavily-fringed as those of a woman, just in time to prevent the tears from falling.

A moment of silence followed this involuntary evidence of a mysterious sorrow. Then Andréé spoke with a gayety belied by the moisture on her cheeks.

“What is that delicious odor, Aunt?” she said, and as she spoke, she took from the bouquet two or three flowers, which she took care not to return after breathing their fragrance. Francis recognized this act with a grateful look, that covered the brow of the young girl with a deep blush. At this moment a summons from Hervé, compelled the young officer to leave the ladies, which Andrée was not for the moment disposed to regret.

The country through which the party was travelling, had by degrees totally changed its appearance. The naked hill-sides and summits had disappeared. The roads ran regularly between green hedges, magnificent trees stood here and there in the meadows, of which the hedges marked the boundaries. Clumps of apple trees, flushed with rosy bloom, charmed the eyes. At the noise of the horses’ feet, great oxen put their heads through the hedges, and contemplated the travellers with a meditative aspect. An occasional low-roofed house, covered with moss and lichens, was seen among the trees, and sometimes a cluster of houses stood together on the plain, and among them a spire pointed out the village church.

But the sense of peace and happiness, awakened by this country scene, was greatly marred by the frequent ruins—by masses of half-burned rubbish—or by long

rows of graves. The rich soil did its best to cover with flowers and sweet mosses, the traces of crime and sorrow, but the fields were untilled. Those who should have cultivated them, lay beneath the sod. Occasionally the travellers heard a sob or the murmur of voices, and saw women and children kneeling and praying—living effigies upon unknown tombs! Trunks of trees lay across the road, branches were broken off, and apertures appeared in the thick hedges. The strange color of the mud in the ditches by the wayside, and the trampled turf, all denoted at intervals, the theatre of one of those struggles, where the glory of the conqueror, whomsoever he might be, was lost in the horror of the fratricide.

“You must admit, Commandant,” said Francis, suddenly breaking the sad silence; “you must admit, that civil war, is a terrible thing.”

“Say war, Francis, civil or not civil. Do you think that a misfortune here, is not one there? The crime, if it be a crime, does not surely stop at the milestone which marks our frontier. Do you think that grief and curses, are less bitter, or less legitimate, because they are expressed in a tongue that is not your own? It has required centuries to master a very simple idea. Men are beginning to call a duel between man and man, an absurd prejudice; the duel of nations is only an application of the same principle on a grand scale. If we accept the Christian doctrine, that all mankind are one great family, then all wars are civil wars, and barbaric extravagance.”

"And yet you are a soldier!" said Francis, looking with some wonder at Hervé.

"The moment that a truth becomes clear to us, is not always the auspicious moment for announcing it," answered the youthful Commandant.

"At all events, Monsieur Hervé, this terrible war is over now, is it not?"

"Yes, for a few days, perhaps only for a few hours," answered Hervé, with melancholy bitterness.

It may be advisable to touch here, on those facts upon which this opinion of the young Commandant was founded, and which was so justified by subsequent events. The treaties of La Launaye and of Saint-Florent, signed successively by Clarette, Cormatin and Stofflet, appeared, it is true, to have included in its terms, all the insurgent districts—Aragon, Bretagne and La Haute Vendée; but the Republican generals knew only too well, how incessant were the intrigues of the Royalist agents in Paris and London, and were convinced that the proposed armistice, was merely to augment the divisions in the ranks of the rebels, and to cause the peasants to lose soldier-like habits they had acquired, by tempting them to return to their peaceful duties and labors. On the other side, the very exercise of the advantages offered to the Royalists in these treaties would have been quite enough to awaken distrust of the chiefs of that party, even if they had been more sincere, than historical evidence allowed them to suppose. The amnesty had been

unquestionably proposed and accepted, in reciprocal good faith, but there was a wheel within a wheel, a rebellion within the heart of the Republic. There were secret and almost incredible concessions, among which was the promise to deliver the young Louis XVII. to the chiefs armed in his name; the credulity of the Vendéan diplomates can hardly be conceived, if we did not know, that while they pretended to accept all the conditions seriously, they in reality estimated them at their real value. This peace, therefore, was, in the opinion of those who had created it, a mere suspension of arms, which both parties believed to be to their interest, and yet we are certain, that some of the Royalist chiefs, regarded as serious, the most incredible among the obligations imposed by these treaties.

It is necessary to recall this detail of the history of this time, to enable our readers to understand our tale, but we do not wish it to be supposed, that we claim any historical value for our romance; we simply desire to commit no anachronism, and to reproduce the manners and the customs, of the epoch of which we write.

The travellers halted in a village, and took an hour to rest and dine, then resumed their journey, travelling until night, without any other incident than passing several Republican encampments, with which passwords were exchanged. Night was coming on, the hills stood dark against the horizon, when the timid Colibri said to the courteous Bruidoux:

"Am I wrong, Sergeant, when I say that in America, most of the men are monkeys?"

The Sergeant shrugged his shoulders with so much energy, that the poor little captive at the other end of the rope was greatly startled.

"Come on, you little rascal!" shouted Bruidoux; "and as for you, Colibri, let me tell you that the notions you have formed of America, and its inhabitants, will cause you to be mistaken for an ass in that distinguished society. Come on, boy! If you pull at the rope in that way, you may chance to discover that my foot is not fairy-like in its proportions. There are no such things as monkeys, Colibri; they are fabulous beasts, invented by priests and tyrants to humiliate mankind. America, Colibri—you are pulling at the rope, boy! America, as I was saying,—boy! if you don't let me talk in comfort, I will shake the life out of you! Ah! That is right; now we go easy. A man, Colibri, can, if he has common sense—Ha! Where is that little Chouan devil! He has cut the rope. Catch the prisoner!—there he goes, in that meadow to the right!"

The child had in fact achieved the escape of which he had been dreaming, having undoubtedly secured the means of doing so while at dinner, and had waited for the dusk to carry out his design. He was running at breathless speed across the meadow, separated from the highway by a ditch and a hedge, both of which Bruidoux leaped without hesitation, the soldiers

following with wild shouts. But while they were still in the centre of the field, the child had reached the other end, very near a thick wood. He turned when he gained this point, and saw that he was master of the situation, and made a little sign as if he wished to speak. A dozen guns were at once pointed at him.

"Down with your guns," cried Bruidoux, breathlessly; "are we murderers of children? Speak, child."

"Take good care of my top," called out the lad over his shoulder, as he disappeared in the wood.

"Well! well!" said Bruidoux, as he returned to the road, amid the ill-concealed laughter of his comrades; "if this is not a great joke! Your top, you little villain," added the old Sergeant between his teeth. "May I live to meet you with a beard on your chin, and if I don't make you swallow your top with all its cord—"

"Well, Sergeant," interrupted Hervé, taking little trouble to conceal his satisfaction at the turn of affairs, "is this the way you allow Royalists, to slip through your fingers?"

"Upon my word, Commandant," muttered the Sergeant, sulkily, "if you mean that I ought to have allowed my men to shoot that mite, you may put five balls through my head, and say no more about it, for I really could not see it in that light."

"Nor could I, old Bruidoux," answered Hervé; "I know very well what you would have done, had you been dealing with a man. As to women and children.

we must leave them to the jailers and executioners, who dishonor the Republic."

The brave Sergeant, completely rehabilitated in the eyes of his inferiors, by the words of the young Commandant, loosened the knots of the now useless ropes, and informed his men, that he should remember their indiscreet gayety, and should remind them of it when they least expected it. He was interrupted in this amusement by Kado, who handed him his drinking flask, saying with great cordiality:

"We may not have the same opinions on many subjects, comrade, but all I have in the world, is at the service of a man whose heart is filled with compassion for the weak."

The Sergeant seemed both surprised and pleased at this overture, and drank from the flask with considerable eagerness. Then returning it to the Breton, he said gravely,

"All brave men have the same ideas on certain subjects."

The march was now resumed, and under the combined influences of night and fatigue, silence was long unbroken in the column. Hervé, noticing that Andréé wavered more than once in her saddle, as if overcome with sleep, rode close at her side, and watched her solicitously. The girl, feeling the supporting arm of her brother, yielded to the rocking motion of her horse and fell asleep. She did not awaken until a distant clock struck eleven. Andréé listened breathlessly and uttered a little exclamation.

“Bellah!” she cried, “that is our clock at Kergant, the chapel clock. Let me go on, brother!”

And without waiting for his reply, the eager child galloped off down a long shady avenue, at the end of which the lights, twinkling through the trees, looked almost like glow-worms.

The Seignoral manor of Kergant was almost cloistral in its construction and appearance. It presented the form of a triangle, each side of which ended in a tall tower with a pointed roof.

The foundations were protected by a moat, but a permanent bridge had taken the place of the old fashioned draw-bridge, and gave access to the large central door. The little chapel, whose clock had just sounded the hour, stood on the right of the château, on a gentle elevation. Several other buildings, doing duty as farm houses and stables, contributed with the chapel, to frame in the square, lying in front of the manor, which did duty as a courtyard. In the centre of this square, several servants with torches in their hands, listened with respect, to the orders given them by a man whose hair was whitened by years, but whose tall form was as erect, and the muscles of his manly face as firm as of yore. The Marquis de Kergant was as usual, all in black, he wore crape on his left arm, and a similar emblem of mourning was attached to the handle of the hunting-knife at his side.

Andréé and Bellah dismounted at the same moment, and the Marquis pressed them both to his heart. The Canoness then approached, embraced her brother

affectionately, and said a few words in a low voice to him. The old Marquis went toward the Scotch soubrette and bowing with great politeness, pointed to the château.

The daughter of the MacGregor offered her arm to the Canoness, and the two moved toward the château.

"Go with them, my daughters," said the Marquis, "you must be dead with fatigue."

"Excuse me, dear father," interrupted Andréé in a coaxing tone, "but we did not come alone, some one——" she hesitated.

"Go on, my child," answered the Marquis, "your brother's room is ready."

Andréé pressed her lips to the hand of her adopted father, wiped away her tears, and retired with her sister. Monsieur de Kergant followed the young girls as far as the bridge over the moat. There he stood still, with his servants behind him, and waited. At this moment the Republican detachment entered the courtyard. Hervé leaped to the ground, and went toward the Marquis, struggling to restrain all evidences of emotion. Francis and the soldiers followed at a respectful distance.

When Hervé was within a few paces of the Marquis, he took off his hat, and saluted the old gentleman with profound respect.

"Sir," said the Marquis de Kergant, "I am deeply indebted to you."

"I only wish, sir, that I merited your thanks," replied Hervé, "I am afraid——"

"Be sure, citizen Commandant, since that is your title," returned the Marquis, "that I am not one of those persons, whose hearts contradict that which their lips utter. Permit me to offer to the Comte de Pelven, hospitality for the night."

Hervé was surprised and offended by the bitter and haughty tone, in which these words were spoken.

"Monsieur," he said, "I am compelled to ask the same favor for my Lieutenant, and my soldiers."

"And these gentlemen would take it in case of refusal I fancy."

"I beg, sir——"

"I am curious to know," interrupted the Marquis, "because I took an oath, never to allow any one of the butchers of your so-called Republic, to step his foot under my roof, and I can only break my oath, in favor of the son of your father."

At these exasperating words, an angry murmur broke from the soldiers, but Hervé imposed silence on them by a gesture, and then turning toward the Marquis, he said:

"May I ask, sir, if you took this oath on the same day that you signed a treaty with our representatives, and accepted the amnesty of our so-called Republic?"

"No!" cried Monsieur de Kergant, "I took it on the day, that you stained your flag, with the blood of your King, and I renewed it on the day that I learned of your last cowardly act. Indeed, it was yesterday that I heard how the son of the Martyr had been murdered in

his prison. The treaty now counts for nothing, we are no longer at peace. Enough! come in, Citizen Hervé, and have no fears, but ask nothing more at my hands."

"You can not really suppose that I would accept such hospitality," answered Hervé, with a smile, the calm politeness of which brought a flush to the brow of the old gentleman. "As I find myself on an enemy's soil, I shall pass my night as a soldier should. Come, my children, we will bivouac together."

The soldiers answered with a shout, and followed their young Commandant, as he hurried from the vicinity of the château.

"Commandant," said Bruidoux, "he would never be so haughty, if he had not a lot of Chouans hidden away in his cellars. Give the word, and we will soon see who will sleep out of doors to night."

"No," answered Hervé, "they would say we had violated the treaty. I am not sorry for this reception, it spares me—— But who is that following us? Ah! it is Kado. Now, my friend, do me one favor, take good care of my horses. I suppose the poor animals do not come under the oath."

"I will do so, sir, but is that all?"

"These brave men are very hungry, Kado. Can't you get them some supper from the village. You will find us at the hill of stones. Here is my purse."

"But Monsieur Hervé——"

"Take my purse, I say, and be careful and pay for everything, even if you are obliged to put the money into the very hand of the Marquis himself."

CHAPTER VI.

THE STONES OF THE DRUIDS.

GUIDED by his childish recollections, Herve, followed by his men, threaded the winding paths which finally led him to a bleak piece of land. With the exception of a few clumps of tall trees, the only sign of vegetation on the arid soil of this mountain-side, was a fine grass lying in patches, almost like moss. The soldiers hesitated, for the night wind swept over the spot, which seemed singularly unfitted to afford them shelter.

"Patience, my friends," said the young officer, "I have a surprise for you!" The soldiers, encouraged by these words, pushed on, Hervé following them, when all at once he heard his name called.

"It is your sister," said Francis.

"Yes, of course," murmured Hervé, "go on with the men and I will join you presently."

The young Lieutenant hurried on, and presently Andréé, breathless and exhausted, threw herself in her brother's arms.

"My dear child," expostulated Hervé, "it is only what we might have expected. Control yourself, I beg."

Andréé tried to speak, but sobs prevented her

"Poor little soul, keep up your courage," murmured Hervé, and then lifting his eyes to Heaven, as he held his sister close to his heart, he cried:

"Oh, God! give us peace, bring all this discord to an end, I implore you."

"Take me with you," entreated Andréé, "take me away with you."

"Take you away, child, and where? To a camp or to a prison?"

"No matter where, dear brother. I can not remain under a roof, from which you have been driven with insults."

"But you are mistaken, I was simply treated as if I was an enemy, as indeed I am. It is quite natural that the report, be it true or false, of the death of the young Pretendant should have exasperated Monsieur Kergant to that degree, that he forgot all that was due to himself."

"And you will take me, Hervé," said Andréé, in the most caressing tone.

"Until I have a safe and honorable shelter for you, my child, it is my duty to leave you in that house which our father chose for you. But we must part, dearest," he added. "I must not allow my soldiers to think for a moment, that I have abandoned them."

"You must not leave me," Andréé murmured. "It is impossible that we who have been separated so long should part so soon, and in this way."

"I promise, Andréé, that I will not leave, to-morrow, without seeing you."

André made him repeat this promise over and over again, and then Hervé, after another tender embrace, turned away, and ran swiftly after his men. The road was too rough, for him to continue long at the pace with which he had begun, but Hervé remembered that there was a little path which ran across, and shortened the distance greatly; this path was stony and steep, but Hervé was none the less determined to try it. He had nearly reached his men, when he found that it was impossible for him to keep his footing, and was obliged to crawl along on his knees, aiding himself by the thorny reeds to which he clung. Francis, hearing the noise, and Hervé's labored breathing, fancied that his friend was pursued.

"Courage," he cried, "we are close at hand. Have we the *lavandières* again? Or what is it?"

"Nothing at all," panted Hervé, as he rolled down the hill, to the very feet of the astonished Lieutenant, "nothing at all, unless it be that I am losing my mind."

He had reached a wide plateau, as smooth as a well shorn lawn, stretching far away toward the horizon where the moon was just rising amid dark and storm-laden clouds. In the centre of this plateau stood large stones, which at a distance looked to be merely a confused mass, but on approaching, a certain mysterious order in their arrangement was instantly recognized. These stones were of all shapes and sizes; some stood apart, rising like colossal forms, others in regular files, and in long parallel lines, like petrified phantoms in

their gray mantles; others again were flat, like long narrow tables, standing on one end; a great number were placed horizontally, making use of that elementary principle of architecture which children put in practice as the base of their house of cards, the same principle too had been made use of in a combination of flat stones which were so arranged as to form low covered galleries closed at one end. This seemed the culmination of the architect's power.

The soldiers looked about with great curiosity. There was not another stone but these to be seen, the soil was not turned over, and there was not the smallest indication as to where these gigantic materials had come from. Had they been brought here from the distant valley? By what means, and for what purpose? This was a question from which even Bruidoux shrank. It had always been a favorite maxim of the old Sergeant, that a military chief, ought never to put himself in such a position, that his men might tax him with ignorance, he did not therefore hesitate to say to Colibri, that several centuries previously, the son of a certain aristocratic giant, amused himself by piling these stones, one on top of another, instead of going to school as it was his duty to do! "for," added the Sergeant, "a son should always obey his father, even if that father be an ogre; even the sons of Pitt and Cobourg should obey Pitt and Cobourg—strange as it might appear!"

This moral lecture was interrupted by Kado's arrival,

who drove before him an ass laden with provisions and fire-wood, to both of which the soldiers soon paid their respects. The old Guard offered his assistance and after kindling their fire, exchanged a cordial grasp of the hand with the Sergeant, promising Hervé and Francis to meet them, with their horses, at a certain point the next morning at daybreak.

After supper, the soldiers selected their beds under these Druid arches, and each slept in peace under those stones, where the rust of centuries covered the stain of human blood. Francis lay just within the entrance to one of the strange galleries, of which we have spoken, where Hervé told him he had often seen old men praying in memory of the worship of their ancestors. The young Commandant soon realized that he had lost his audience, and smiled as he drew a cloak with paternal care closer over Francis, but sighed with regret for that age when sleep comes so readily.

After walking about these once sacred precincts, Hervé seated himself on one of the tables scattered about. This spot still retained for the inhabitants of the district, a vague reflection of its antique character. Fear and respect held some people aloof from the spot as from an unholy place; but it also prostrated others with words from the Holy Gospel on their lips, at the foot of these pitiless altars.

That element of superstitious curiosity which has so much power over children, and which is not altogether lost on reaching man's estate, had caused this place

never to be forgotten by Hervé. When very young his imagination was fired by the legends he heard around the evening fire, and he shivered with delicious terror as he hovered about these stones day after day. He remembered once, how he had hung about one of the galleries so fascinated that he could not make up his mind to go home. Night came on; he was missed from the château, and a search being made, he was found unconscious within the gallery, as if he had met face to face, the angry God, to whom the ancient priests had made their sacrifices. Bellah, whose natural turn of mind was to romance and thought, felt an attraction as keen as his to the Druid hill, and often accompanied Hervé thither. When night peopled with doubtful shadows this city of the Stones, the girl shrank close to the side of her adopted brother, who was delighted to extend his protection; both regarding it, as a presentiment of a still tenderer affection, and the first link in a chain, that should bind them closer together in the future.

The girl and boy liked to repeat to each other the graceful or terrible traditions of their native land, and to search on the altars, for indications of sanguinary rites. It was here, indeed, that the two children experienced the first heart-beats of a common danger—the first joys of an exchange of dreams and delusions.

These recollections now overwhelmed Hervé; he was too fatigued to sleep, and was half lying on the stone table, in the attitude of a statue on a tomb, when

he started up, for among the further rocks he saw the form of a woman, slowly drawing nearer. Hervé pressed his hands to his brow, asking himself if his reason had left him, but the apparition glided onward, and he recognized Bellah.

"You here!" he cried, as he snatched her hand.

Mademoiselle de Kergant slowly withdrew it.

"Commandant Hervé," she said, coldly, "will you kindly grant me a few moments conversation?"

Hervé, thus recalled to the present, bowed and took off his hat; then seeing that Bellah's anxious eyes essayed to pierce the darkness around her, he said:

"Mademoiselle de Kergant may speak without the least fear: my men are all asleep, off there by the fire."

The young girl leaned against the stone, near which Commandant Hervé stood erect, and did not speak for a minute or two.

At last she said, slowly: "Monsieur, your government has cancelled by a new crime, the treaties between us —"

"I am not aware of it," Hervé answered.

"I tell you so," said Bellah.

Hervé bowed profoundly.

"Have you sir," she continued, "such a singular idea of duty, that you consider yourself bound to adhere to a perjured government? Are you resolved to bear such burthen, and assume such tasks as your Republic may see fit to impose upon you?"

"Permit me, Mademoiselle de Kergant," answered

Hervé, "to repudiate the complicity with which you seem so eager to charge me; I answer, of course, only for myself. I serve not men so much as ideas—I deplore the mistakes to which these ideas lead—I pity the martyrs they make, and would gladly rescue them, but the principles themselves are pure, and worthy of the faith which I have sworn to them. As to this new crime, Mademoiselle will permit me to hear of it, from impartial lips, before I venture to sit in judgment upon it."

"Do you doubt my word, Sir?" said Bellah, with bitter disdain.

"Do I doubt your word? Yes, I do!" cried Hervé, with passionate vehemence. "I doubt your voice itself—I doubt those cold lips and the strange words they utter. Who are you? Whence come you? Why are you here? Who sent you? Was this the place to select, in which to taunt and overwhelm me? By Heaven! this is a cruelty that passes the imagination of man. Leave me."

At this sudden bursting of the storm, the girl's courage seemed to falter, and it was in a faint and tremulous voice, like a penitent's, that she replied:

"Yes, Hervé, I will go."

But instead of going, she pressed both hands to her heart, as if to restrain its tumultuous beating.

"Bellah," said Hervé, more gently, "forgive me,—but you have filled up the measure of my mortifications. Will you go now? You will leave a man

here, whose spirit cannot bear up under another straw. Your task is done. Farewell!"

"Oh! not yet—not thus, Hervé! I came—I hoped—yes, I still hope, that your childish associations with this place are not forgotten, whatever may have been these two long years of separation."

"They have been such," interrupted Hervé, "that I would give them, and two more yet to come, for one hour of our happy Past."

"Oh! Thank God—thank God. This Past may be ours once more, Hervé! you can return to this family, to this home, and find a father and sisters ready to receive you with open arms—you can do this—will you?"

"Oh! if I could think that this could ever be," said the young man, sadly.

"It can be now, this very moment!" answered Bellah, eagerly. "Listen to me, Hervé: The war is about to re-commence, and I have reasons—I know, in fact, that our cause will triumph. You do not care for what I say, but I know it. This cause is that of your ancestors—it is the cause of God; you have deceived yourself, Hervé. My father has ambitious projects for you; he is determined that your talents and your courage shall be recognized—all this justice you will obtain from us—of that you may be sure. If you wish proofs, Hervé, take this."

As she uttered these last words, she drew from her bosom a folded paper, which she placed in his hands.

He drew back with a shudder as if an adder had touched him, and the paper fell at his feet.

"The justice I should deserve," he said, "would be the contempt of my friends—the contempt of my enemies and yours also, Bellah."

"Mine! You are mistaken! I should never entertain contempt for a man who nobly retracts his errors."

"You would be the first to despise me, Bellah, and you would be right. Not another word on this point, I implore you."

"Suppose I should tell you, Hervé, that you can never return to your Republicans—that death awaits you?"

"It is a familiar prospect to a soldier, and each hour I live, renders me more reconciled to death."

"Yes," answered the girl, in a strange tone; "you are ready to die as a soldier, but an ignominious death—the death of a traitor; what do you think of that?"

"Such an idea is not worth thinking about at all—"

"But you will be accused, and then the end is certain. In the name of Heaven, realize that I am speaking the truth."

"Tell me what you mean."

"Alas! Were my father's life involved as is yours, my lips would still be sealed."

"So be it; my judges will tell me."

"Hervé! your heart has grown hard among these men of blood; you sacrifice your life without remembering that it does not belong to yourself alone. Poor André!"

"If misfortune should come to me," said Hervé, turning his head away, "I know with whom I leave her."

Bellah grasped the young man's arm with almost savage energy, and fixing her large eyes, swimming in tears, upon him, she said, slowly:

"And what of me?"

Bellah's despairing gesture, her low hoarse whisper, lent to these words so much expression, that Hervé was moved to the depth of his heart. It was almost as if the lips of her whom he loved, had touched his own. He took with trembling hand, the icy cold fingers which Bellah yielded, and looking into the very eyes of the girl, who stood with loudly beating heart before him, he said:

"Bellah, I love you very dearly! My life for the last two years, has been filled with this love, and yet—mistaken or not—I can see no honor separate from the duties before me. I could not live dishonored—not even with you—above all with you!"

As he finished speaking, Mademoiselle de Kergant's head drooped heavily on her breast.

"And there is nothing more for me to say—nothing!" she murmured, in despair. "Hervé," she continued, "Understand that this is irrevocable—that our adieu is eternal; we shall never see each other again—all is finished—finished! May God forgive me for having spoken to you thus; I have allowed my weak woman's heart to influence me. I thought I

was doing right, because it cost me a greater struggle than anything else in the world, and I am mortified and ashamed."

"Bellah! Bellah! you are killing me! Adieu."

"Adieu!" then cried the girl, with a spasmodic effort at self-control. "Adieu, man without memory, soul, heart or pity! my duty is as unplaceable as yours. Adieu!" And she departed, moving swiftly, but so noiselessly that her going, like her coming, was as the silent vision of a dream.

As soon as she had disappeared, Pelven followed her some little distance, as if unwilling to submit to her loss. He fancied that he heard her speak, and then that a man's voice was mingled with hers. The idea that this attempt of Mademoiselle de Kergant was a concerted plan—that she had a confidant, now occurred to Hervé in the most obnoxious colors.

He took a dense path, and moving on cautiously, was soon far enough to see Bellah, and at her side a man of elegant figure, elastic step, and a way of moving that was both energetic and youthful. Mademoiselle seemed to interrupt him from time to time, as if making objections, and her companion's animated voice sometimes rose high and again subsided into a tone of the greatest intimacy. Hervé, through his familiarity with the country, was able to follow the pair unsuspected by them for some time longer, for he wanted to obtain some clue to the identity of the stranger, either through voice or gesture.

When they were within a hundred feet of the château, the unknown suddenly stopped, and, uttering a few vehement words, snatched Bellah's hand. Hervé, with an exclamation of rage, was about to leap the hedge which concealed him, when a most unexpected accident nailed him to the ground; Mademoiselle Kergant released her arm, and took in turn the hand of her bold cavalier—pressing her lips upon it, she bent nearly to the ground. After which she hurried to the château, followed more slowly by the man, who had just received from her this extraordinary mark of favor.

Hervé, no longer caring to conceal himself and absolutely carried away by rage, now advanced.

"Stop, sir," he exclaimed, in a voice which if not very loud, was at least distinct.

The unknown turned.

"Who is it? Who calls?" he asked.

"It is I, sir. Pray, wait a moment, I beg of you," answered the Commandant, hurrying on.

"The deuce take that officer," murmured the unknown; and with a shrug of his shoulders he quickened his steps to that degree, that Hervé could not reach him until he entered the court of the château, where Hervé did not care to follow.

"Never," he said to himself, as he turned on his heel; "never did the fantastic images of delirium depict such a scene! Bellah—that haughty, modest young girl—on her knees before a man, receiving—

what do I say? herself lavishing caresses on him; and that, too, when her lips were still trembling with the words she had uttered to another. Can it be possible?"

The young man, as he spoke, had drawn the white plume from his breast, and now tore it into fragments, which he tossed to the four winds of heaven.

After this execution in effigy, Hervé went back to the dying embers of the bivouac fire, and threw himself on the ground near Francis. The intense fatigue of this day of mental and physical excitement, had been so great that, in spite of his agitation, he slept so soundly, that the punctual Bruidoux was obliged to awaken him at daybreak.

Not ten minutes after the party had gone, little Andréé arrived, all out of breath, at a point where her eyes swept the plateau. Seeing it deserted, she uttered a cry of agony, and, throwing herself on the ground, wept for hours.

CHAPTER VII.

LIBERTY AND EQUALITY.

THE principal corps of the Republican army then had its quarters at Vitré, on the limit of l'Ile-et-Velame and of *La Mayenne*. The general in chief occupied, between Rennes and Vitré, a dwelling of modest appearance—something between a manor house and a farm, which had no claim to the honor of such a guest, other than those presented by its sequestered and picturesque aspect. It is to the courtyard of this house that we now take our readers, informing them that four days have elapsed since the last scene of our romance.

It was one o'clock in the day. Within the courtyard, surrounded by high walls, a number of soldiers in uniform, were chatting with that reserve which indicated the presence of a superior officer.

The most active of the men, were polishing their arms or equipments of the horses, belonging to their officers. Some, more melancholy, lay on the ground watching the light clouds floating over the sky; others, face downward, seemed to be absorbed in botanical studies. A very characteristic corner of this picture was formed by two soldiers, each with a gray moustache, who having laid a long board across the trunk

of a fallen tree, were balancing each other with portentous gravity, as if their very salvation were involved. It was toward this group that a young officer, crossing the court-yard with a bundle of papers in his hand and a pen between his teeth, now directed his footsteps.

"Well, Mayençais," he said. "Has not Commandant Pelven yet come back?"

"Not yet," answered Mayençais, from up in the air, as his end of the board was at that moment in the ascendant.

"And has nothing been heard from him?"

"Nothing at all," said Mayençais, as he came slowly down.

"Look out, you fat porpoise," cried the young man, who, a little offended at the indifference with which the soldier had answered, gave to the board on which Mayençais was seated, a slight push with his foot. The board, yielding to the impetus, turned on itself, and allowed the two men to roll on the grass, greatly to the satisfaction of the public.

While the two old soldiers endeavored to replace the board to their satisfaction, the sentinel standing just outside the great arched door, that opened into the country, uttered a quick, "Who goes there?" to which an imperative voice made reply. The sentinel presented arms, and in a moment five horsemen, with garments covered with dust and foam, entered the court-yard with great noise.

Four of them wore the uniform of the Republican hussars, while the fifth—the one who was first to enter, seemed to be a civilian, for he wore no distinctive signs, except a belt and a tri-colored plume. The sudden silence which ensued in the court-yard, and a name whispered among the soldiers, showed that to many of them, the new comer was an old acquaintance, and an acquaintance, too, who was to be welcomed with more respect than pleasure. He who received this somewhat equivocal greeting justified it in some degree, by the almost ascetic severity of his features, and the expression of his eyes, which was singularly stern and almost implacable. Giving the bridle of his horse to a soldier, he hurriedly entered the house, and, ascending the stairs, found himself in an ante-room, where two sentinels were on guard. Waving away one of them, who, while he made a military salute, seemed to hesitate in admitting him, the new-comer, himself opened the double door into the room, and seemed at last to have found that for which he had been seeking, with such haste and scanty ceremony. Two persons were in the room invaded in this discourteous fashion, and one of these, at the noise made by the opening door—a young girl, slender and childish in appearance—started up from the corner of a sofa, on which she had been sitting, or rather curled *à la Turque*. On recognizing the austere visage that presented itself, she uttered a little cry, and gliding across the room, disappeared behind a portière.

This rapid flight left the indiscreet visitor tête à tête with a man, tall and elegant in appearance, whose youthful features were singularly handsome. This personage wore a military coat, embroidered in gold, with oak leaves on collar and cuffs. Before him lay a tri-colored scarf, and a sword, on a table close to the sofa so promptly deserted. Detecting the agitation occasioned by his unexpected appearance, the unprepossessing-looking individual who introduces our readers to this quiet scene, stopped short, with frowning brow and a mocking smile on his lips. A deep blush mounted to the cheeks of him to whom this mute reproach was addressed. He half rose, and then seating himself with a certain haughty negligence, he said coldly:

“Citizen Representative, it seems to me that you are not over ceremonious?”

“It is a bad habit I have, citizen General, of neglecting, with others, those punctilious precautions of etiquette, the need of which I have never felt for myself! I beg to excuse myself, as I do not care, in so small a matter, to appeal to the rights with which we are clothed, by the power of the Convention, in the rights of the Republic.

“Your rights! the Republic!” interrupted the young general impetuously. “There is but one Republic in the world and that is the masqued Republic of Venice. which never conferred such rights as you arrogate. I ought to remind you, citizen, that there is a point

beyond which legitimate surveillance may be called by another name."

"And have we reached that point?" asked the Representative, in a low, stern voice. "Explain yourself, citizen, if you please. If you merely intend an offence to me personally, I assure you that I am indifferent, but if you intend to lay down limits to the Convention, then I say, that it is well that I should be aware of the intent, before I go on with what I came to say."

The General's frowning brow, the quiver of his lips, indicated that it was with difficulty that he submitted to the yoke, with which the heavy hand of the Convention had weighted his victorious head. He rose hastily and said with a constrained smile :

"I must say, that I should like to be, as every charcoal burner is, master in my house. Nevertheless, if my first impulse—perhaps an excusable one—allowed me to forget the respect I owe to the Convention, and to all those who are endowed by them with authority, I am ready to say that I regret it. You seem to have come off a long journey, citizen. Are you a bearer of despatches?"

"No ; only of news."

"And of what nature?"

"I should say they were good, if I might judge them from my individual point of view, for they confirm all my previsions, and justify all my warnings, to which no one would listen. Your talents are great, citizen Gen-

eral, but you are young! A Revolutionary epoch is not one for chivalric illusions. Civic crowns are not woven by women's fingers. Your soul is great I know, but you are too sensible to the flattery of a transitory popularity. He who puts his hand to a Revolutionary work should resign himself to knowing, that his name is accursed even when his task is a good one. You did not choose to listen to me—you wished to temporize when it was necessary to fight; to cure when you should have amputated. I told you then, that all your conciliatory words, all your concessions, served only ends of treason and ingratitude; and to-day I tell you that your harvest is ripe."

"That is to say, I presume," answered the young General, who had with difficulty restrained his impatience during the tirade of this dreary Republican, "that is to say, the treaty is broken."

"Openly and audaciously."

"And is it I, whom you accuse, citizen? Has the moderation and humanity which I endeavored to introduce into this melancholy war been carried out? Have I been seconded? Have I even been obeyed? Was it I who caused the former Comte de Geslin, and de Tristam to be assassinated? Was it I who ordered the head of Boishardy to be borne across the country, to demonstrate the results which should follow my pacific words? These crimes, notwithstanding my entreaties, are still unpunished; and the brigands, as we call them, have hot blood in their veins, and have

proved it—that is all! The Chouans have then returned again?”

“The whole country is in a blaze from Le bas Maine to the end of Brétagne. One of our corvettes has been surprised and captured on the Vaunes—Duhesme has been attacked before Plélan—Humbert at Camors! Our magazines in the Finisterre are taken; our fortifications throughout the Morbigan, are overpowered, and captured.”

“Is that all?” asked the General, who affected to listen with indifference, as the Representative showed pleasure in the recital.

“No; it is not all. A Bourbon is at the head of the rebels.”

“Impossible!” cried the young Republican chief, instantly losing the air with which he had clothed his wounded pride. “That would be terrible,” he added, in a lower voice.

“What I say is true. Duhesme and Humbert both saw him. Humbert even spoke to him during the combat. He is, they say, the *ci devant* Comte d’Artois, a brother of Capet.”

“The Comte d’Artois! Impossible!” repeated the General, whose animated gestures betrayed great agitation. “Only a moment ago, just before you entered in fact, I heard of the arrival of his aide-de-camp, the *ci devant* Marquis de Rivière, at Charettes, but of the Prince, nothing. He had not left English soil then,

and how and at what fatal moment, did he set foot in Brittany?"

"It is precisely upon that point, citizen General, that I wish to ask your advice. The surveillance has been so careful on the coast, that the appearance of the Prince can only be accounted for in a most melancholy way. The word treason has been whispered."

The General wheeled quickly, and fixing his flashing eyes on the cold face of the Representative, he repeated in a voice of thunder:

"The word treason has been whispered? The treason of whom?"

"Do not misunderstand me, citizen general, no one dreams of suspecting you."

"And why not, pray," answered the young man bitterly. "Have I not expected that accusation, ever since the day that I made my first attempt to render this war more worthy of this century and of a civilized nation? It is necessary," he continued, taking as he spoke several rapid strides up and down the room; "it is necessary, it seems, to cut, hew and destroy! Is it an army or a city before me? It is a people—throw them into the ocean, and pass the ploughshare over half of France if you can, I will not countenance another of these atrocious follies. If this be treason, so be it! Let them suspect me—let them denounce me! I care not. I am weary of this savage war, wherein I may perish some morning, as ignominiously as if I were a chief of bandits. Let them take my

sword—I consent. Nay, I demand it. Let them send me to regain my military rank, step by step, on real battle-fields, where the wounded are not murdered nor the dead mutilated !”

“You are losing your self command, General, and yet you will need it all to listen to that which I have still to say.”

“I told you distinctly,” he continued, “that there was not the smallest suspicion against you ; and I spoke the absolute truth, but you are reproached, for bestowing your confidence with too much facility, for allowing yourself to regard suspicious personages with far too much friendliness. I speak now of one of your officers, one whom you have received on the most intimate terms, the *ci-devant* Comte de Pelven.”

“Commandant Pelven, citizen Representative, has made for the Republic, more sacrifices than either you or I, and in leaving him two years in the humble position he occupies, a most crying injustice has been perpetrated, an injustice that I shall make haste to repair.”

“Hasten, I beg, or you may be anticipated, for the Bourbon, if he be not an ingrate, owes a high recompense to the pure patriot who received him on his landing, and gave him an escort through a country swarming with ‘the brigands’ as you call them.”

“Have you proofs of these assertions, citizen ?”

“Here they are,” and the Representative drew a paper from his portfolio. “This is what one of our

agents in England writes, you yourself can judge of the veracity of these statements as well as myself. This letter, unfortunately, reached me two days after the event it was destined to anticipate. Listen: "The English frigate *Loyalty* will land on the west of Brittany, a Bourbon who is said to be the Duc d'Enghien, son of Condé, or the Comte d'Artois: this last is the most probable. He travels under the disguise of a woman, in the suite of the sister and the daughter, of the ci-devant Kergant, who have obtained permission to return to France, through the intercession of the ci-devant Pelven, a Republican officer, high in the favor of the General-in-Chief. The connivance of Pelven, is relied upon to protect the embarkation, which will take place within a few days on the southern coast of Finisterre; the West, which this time includes Normandy, only awaits the long promised arrival of this chief to rise *en masse*."

The General, during this narration, stood dumb with surprise.

"Is this true? Is this absolutely certain?" added the Representative, pitilessly displaying the letter. The young man grasped it and read it at a glance, uttered a low groan, and dropped on the sofa, where he buried his face in his hands.

The only spectator of this anguish was not of a character from whom compassion could be expected for any weakness of poor humanity, however generous the source might be: in fact, almost a gleam of triumph

might be detected, in the gaze which he fixed on the young Republican officer.

"I am more surprised at the audacity of your friend," he resumed, "than at anything else. Instead of remaining with this person whom he has so well served, I am informed that he is on his way back to you, to resume the *espionage* which has served him so well."

"*Espionage!* Preposterous. Pelven, a spy!" murmured the General, as if the conjunction were an enigma that he could not solve.

"The first thing, citizen General, as you will admit," continued his companion, "is that justice shall be done."

The General did not speak for some minutes, then, lifting his head, he said,

"It is well, citizen Representative, it shall be done."

"I will wait for Pelven's return, you will then give me an escort, and I will take him to Rouen, where he shall be interrogated before my colleagues, after which he will be tried and sentenced."

"I tell you citizen, that justice shall be done. Did you not understand me?"

"Not in the least," answered the Representative with an air of the greatest surprise. "Do you mean that you refuse to surrender this great criminal to the vengeance of the Nation?"

"I hold from the Nation the power to avenge it, I require no aid from any one."

The General spoke with a calm decision that enraged the Representative.

"Young man," he exclaimed, with great violence, "I have borne much from you, far more than my character and my duty demanded, but this is beyond all patience and all belief! Do you forget who I am? Do you forget that were I to open this window and utter two words, I could have your epaulettes torn from your shoulders by your own soldiers?"

"Try it," said the General, who having once taken his resolution, seemed to delight in his novel and dangerous independence.

"He has certainly lost his mind," murmured his companion, who could not comprehend such bravado, and such disregard of the terrible power, with which he was invested.

"I should like," continued the General, "to see this point tested. One of us two, citizen, is too much in the confidence of the Nation. It is advisable to discover which, and I snatch the present occasion to find out. Since this stupendous and terrible war has again blazed out, it is not for me to try and smother it, unless my feet and hands, are released from the iron chain with which you have hampered them. What can I do, if all my movements are controlled, by the inquisitorial spirit manifested by you and your colleagues — if all my intentions are questioned by fanatics, and my plans frustrated by ignorance?"

"Ah!" answered the Representative. "I see it all now, and can only say, woe to you, or woe to the Republic!"

“The Republic!” answered the young man, his fine features glowing with enthusiasm. “The Republic is my mother! I owe everything to her. I love her with my whole heart as I have proved more than once, and as I hope, please God, to prove again, but this Republic is not yours. Her likeness, graven on my heart, is not that which you have enthroned, face to face with the scaffold on our public squares.

“Gladly would I, at the price of my life, tear from history, this black and bloody page, which you desecrate with this sacred name. Future generations will never pardon you for having made this name — this grand name — Republic, a word significant only of disaster and mourning. They will accuse you of having given, by your excesses, an eternal pretext to the cowardly — an eternal excuse to tyrants! Permit me to finish, you can teach me nothing. I know only too well with what arguments you are accustomed to sustain your fanaticism. I do not pretend to argue with you, but go question my soldiers, ask them if they need to be spurred on to victory, by the sinister noises with which you fill our land. Inhumanity is not strength! Hatred is not justice! The Republic is not terror! I have confessed my faith under the lifted battle axe of your all-powerful friends. I have been a guest in their dungeons, and if I left them, only to submit to degrading supervision and control, it is quite time that their doors should be again opened to receive me. Go you now, go and denounce me; the comité shall judge

between us; but believe me, citizen, you had best make no imprudent trial of your strength; you may readily believe that my patience is at an end as well as your own, and no one shall, in my presence, provoke my soldiers to insubordination. Adieu."

During this explosion of a storm long gathering, and long contained within the soul of the young General-in-Chief, the face of his companion had first changed to a deep crimson, which, fading away, left it of a livid pallor. His agitated lips refused to frame words in which to express his rage. He could reply only with a smothered exclamation to this abrupt dismissal of his rival, and turning on his heel, left the room with a threatening gesture of his uplifted hand.

But the time was already past, when a sign from such a hand could stiffen into death, the brow on which glory had set its seal; and if weighed in the scales, the talents, and the services of the conqueror of Wissembourg would have had more weight than ferocious puritanism and the barbaric virtues of the survivor of Thermidor.

More than once before — this period of the Revolutionary epoch, had the tent of the Republican generals been the theatre of scenes like this which we have endeavored to bring before the eyes of our readers, but very often in the intimacy of their military households, the officers in command gave a free vent to the bitter discouragement engendered in their hearts by the overshadowing presence of the Representatives. They

beheld the unity and dignity of the Commanders compromised, the science of war, or the inspiration of a battle-field, argued upon, and thwarted by the cold objections of men who knew nothing of military matters. Such were the avowed texts of the often fatal discords.

But to these must be added the sense of divided power, of wounded pride, and the many other mean emotions, which effect a lodgment even in heroic natures.

History has registered some of the ignorant and presumptuous acts, of which the Republican Generals insist that their civil colleagues were guilty, but, in strict justice, it should not be forgotten that among the lawyers and legislators out of place on the battle-field, more than one nobly upheld our flag, and assisted our wounded veterans in their hour of need.

After the Thermidorienne reaction, the greater part of the Representatives who had been sent to the frontiers and to the west, on duty, feeling that they were no longer fully sustained by the central authority, had allowed their rôle to be modified by circumstances, and permitted their weakened sovereignty to slip from their hands. Some among them, however, either from a lack of sagacity, or from a determination to resist the new order of things, continued in their previous course. Among these last, was the man whom we have just presented to our readers. His reputation for courage and honesty, had caused him to be respected by the meas-

ures of purification, which followed the triumph of the moderate party, but his ungovernable temper, his prejudices, and even his very virtues, were so in excess, that his relations with the young General-in-Chief, were soon tinged with bitterness, which was rapidly amounting to hatred. We have just seen the decision with which the youthful commander discharged his debt toward his redoubtable adversary.

CHAPTER VIII.

GENERAL HOCHÉ.

WE are conscious that we should apologize for placing in the corner of our lightly sketched picture, one of the most brilliant, as well as one of the purest, figures of our Revolutionary annals—Lazan Hoche, then General-in-Chief of the army, on the coast of Brest, who was soon to unite under his command, all the forces of the Republic, in Brittany and Vendée, had not yet reached his twenty-seventh birth-day. His tall figure, the singular beauty of his features, the soldier-like and frank expression of his face, the modest gravity of his bearing, were all indicative of strength and intellect; he imposed respect, and won confidence. Like the Roman Ambassador, the young hero of the new Republic carried in his face, menaces of war, and promises of peace. He, alone, through the peculiar qualities of his rare genius, was able to bring back to the French nationality those brave and unhappy Provinces, then separated by an abyss of blood; he, in all probability, was the only man, who in that upheaval of anarchical passions, and gigantic ambitions, wherein perished our first Republic, had opposed with success, the powerful and disinterested personality of a Washington. To him, at least, has been given the honor of a

posthumous rivalry with him, who placed glory above liberty.

But Providence marked with narrow limits this brilliant existence. The illustrious Republican, inscribed his name in letters of gold upon the page of history, but the characters were written with feverish haste, as if he had been moved by some sad presentiment. On that haughty face, and in his very smile, one could see that melancholy that still lends, after the lapse of centuries, so touching a grace to the recollection of Germanicus, a quality which is lacking when we think of Cæsar.

It is one of the misfortunes, if not one of the crimes of a novel writer, that he is compelled to reduce to the most puerile proportions, these giants of history. He can, in truth, offer as an excuse, that interest with which we always see these demi-gods descend from their pedestal, and stand on the common ground with the rest of humanity; but carpers have none the less the right to complain, and to say, that they are reminded of a child who in his play, pretends to utilize the most formidable machinery of war and industry. However this may be, as we are convinced that errors acknowledged, are, at least, half pardoned, we resume with lightened conscience, the thread of our recital.

The General, relieved of the presence of his foe, did not move for some moments. Then, with the air of a man who abandons himself to the consequences of an irreparable act, and wishes to give no further thought

to it for a time, he rose and went to a window looking out on the court. He, apparently, did not see, that for which he was looking, and he began to pace the room impatiently, stopping to look at a clock, or from the window again.

More than one quick exclamation escaped his lips. "What a deception! Men are all alike! a hard lesson! his dupe! his plaything! what misfortunes he will cause, and what bloodshed. An insult to me, a public crime. Poor wretch!"

A light tap on the door came at this moment; the General said "come in," in anything but a persuasive tone.

The door opened slowly, and Commandant Hervé de Pelven presented himself.

General Hoche advanced slowly to meet the man, whom only an hour before he had gladly called his friend, and fixing his eyes upon him, began to examine his face with curiosity, as if to discover under those well known and aristocratic features, some secret sign, some hideous suggestion of treachery.

Concluding this examination with an expressive shrug of his shoulders, he seated himself on a corner of the table where his sword lay, and looking Pelven full in the eyes, he said:

"Where is Francis?"

This question aroused Hervé from the silent astonishment in which he had been thrown by this most unaccountable reception.

"I ask where Francis is," repeated the General, raising his voice, "what have you done with him?"

"Francis is in the courtyard," answered Pelven, "we came together."

"Ah! Tell me, sir, I beg of you, if you have succeeded in all your plans."

"I have, sir," replied Hervé, coldly, his pride was wounded by this manner, so different from the cordial familiarity to which he was accustomed.

"I am rejoiced to learn this, for your sake, as well as mine."

"I must confess, General, that I do not understand you."

"Ah! you can tell me, however, how the Chouans are flourishing in the country."

"I can tell you, General, that from all I have seen, I am convinced that an insurrection is impending. We even heard artillery late last night."

"Indeed! It seems then that your expedition has been a dangerous one? You will have your reward if there be justice in this world! But in the meantime, I wish to congratulate you on the specialty, which you have had the good taste to select; never did I see a mask of infamy, that bore so close a resemblance to the face of an honest man."

The young Commandant flushed to the roots of his hair.

"I cannot but see," he said, "that I am looked upon as a criminal. I was warned of this, but I thought

that from General Hoche, an explanation would precede an insult."

Hervé's manner and tone shook the convictions of the General, but before he could speak, his attention was drawn to the courtyard, by the stamping of horses, followed by a tumult of voices, and, almost instantly Francis appeared in an evident state of excitement, and with letters in his hand.

"Excuse me, General," he said, "but these are dispatches brought by two dragoons from Humbert and Duhesme. It seems that the excitement is spreading."

The General, with a friendly tap on the shoulder of the boyish Lieutenant, opened the dispatches hastily, and ran them over muttering confused exclamations. Then throwing the papers on the floor he addressed Francis in a tone of suppressed rage.

"My boy," he said, "you will in this moment, take a great step in your experience of life. Here is Monsieur Pelven, our mutual friend: look at him well, and remember all the rest of your life that under that loyal physiognomy we have loved so well, lies hidden the soul of a spy and a traitor."

"Some one has lied to you, General," said Hervé, coldly, while an exclamation of terrified incredulity broke from the lips of the young Lieutenant.

"I doubted, while doubt was possible," answered Hoche, "but Monsieur de Pelven, your negligence is unpardonable, for experience should have taught you that spies were dangerous things."

As he spoke he laid before the two young officers, a bit of crumpled paper, stained with mud, on which was written these words:

“Pass Comte Hervé de Pelven, field-marshal of the Catholic and Royal army. Signed: Charette.”

Hervé looked at his Lieutenant, and murmured the name—“Bellah.”

“This pass,” continued the General, “was found by one of our secret agents, at a place at Kergant, where you encamped for the night. If other proofs were wanting, this is enough in itself. Now sir, have you anything to say in defence of your life, for I warn you that it is in danger? Take off your sword, sir.”

Hervé unbuckled his sword, and handed it to Francis, who received it with trembling hands.

“General, said the young Commandant, “I swear before God that I am not guilty. I am overwhelmed by appearances, to which I can oppose nothing but my word. That pass is authentic, but it was never in my possession, I refused it. I may add that these men whom you suppose to be my friends, attempted my life five days since.”

“Did they wound you?” asked Hoche eagerly, “can you show me a wound?”

“I can not, unfortunately.”

“But, General,” cried Francis, “I was there, I saw it all, they knocked down and stunned the Commandant.”

“I dare say,” said the General, coldly. “Enough, Francis.”

"You are not a child, Monsieur de Pelven," he continued, "and you know enough to realize the inevitable conclusion of this matter. Shall it end here between us two, or shall I summon a court of inquiry?"

"I desire no other judge than yourself, General."

"You may be certain that you will have none more disposed in your favor. You have deceived me strangely, cruelly deceived me, I may say. There may have been a certain amount of courage and sagacity evinced in your rôle, but it is certainly not one that I should have coveted had I been in your place. I was very far, sir——," and the General's voice faltered and became almost tender, "I was very far from imagining that our friendly relations would end like this; it is with profound sorrow——"

The General, disturbed by the sobs which Francis could no longer restrain, suddenly ceased to speak. He opened the door, and calling to one of the soldiers in the ante-chamber, he said to him,

"Citizen Pelven is your prisoner, you are responsible for him. Lieutenant Francis, wait for me in that room."

The young Lieutenant turned on his protector a supplicating glance, but an imperious gesture quickened his steps, and the door of an adjoining room closed upon him.

"Monsieur Pelven," the General then resumed, "they wish to carry you off to prison, and from thence you know where. I took it for granted, however,

notwithstanding all that has passed, that you would prefer the death of a soldier."

"Thanks, General," said Hervé.

"You have fifteen minutes, sir."

Hoche turned away quickly, as he finished these words, and closing the door, summoned Francis to join him in the ante-room. An old corporal saluted him respectfully. The General called him.

"Take fifteen men," he said, "march them into the field on the left of the farm, load your pieces and wait for the man I shall send you."

The General, leaving Francis stunned and motionless, went out of the room.

Our readers will probably have noticed with surprise, that no adequate explanation had taken place between the judge and the accused, that the latter had no idea of the nature or of the extent of the crime imputed to him; but on the one side, the General believed that he had nothing to learn; and on the other, Pelven felt that all that had happened, was but the logical sequence of the plots and manœuvres, which aimed at attaching him to the Royalists, by causing him to be suspected by his party.

In the days in which Pelven lived, not half of this proof was needed for his condemnation, and thus he saw verified, the prediction made by Mademoiselle de Kergant among the Dru d stones, as well as his own vague apprehensions, by which he had been haunted from the beginning to the end, of this disastrous expedition.

Hervé, left under the care of the sentinel, was seeking to render himself master of the instinctive revolt of the chaos of ideas and feelings necessarily awakened in every human being by the near approach of death. His eyes, in spite of himself, were riveted on the hands of the clock; something like the breath of the biblical vision, seemed to waver before it and cover it with a white cloud. Passing his hand hastily over his brow, the young man started to his feet, and, after pacing the room once or twice, drew a long breath, as if he felt that he was victorious in the struggle through which he had come. He seated himself at the table and wrote a few hasty lines intended for his sister. Ten minutes had elapsed, and he was still writing, when a slight noise made him turn towards the door; standing there he saw Hoche.

"Excuse me, sir, if I disturb you," said the General, with his eyes fixed on those of the young man, "but it seems to me that you can have no objection now, to telling me the name of the Bourbon, who, in his feminine disguise, and in the suite of your relatives, was landed on the coast of Brittany through your kind assistance?"

At this clearly stated question, such an expression of utter stupefaction appeared on Hervé's usually keen face, that the General smiled faintly.

"I knew it General! I would have wagered my head on it," cried Francis, rushing into the room.

"Be off with you," said Hoche, with an impatient

gesture, which the youthful aide-de-camp did not see fit to obey.

"It seems to me, Monsieur Pelven," continued the General, "that you did not suppose me to be so well informed."

"He is innocent, General!" cried Francis, in a state of intense excitement.

"Upon my honor, General," stammered Hervé, "I know nothing of what you are saying."

A smile appeared on the young General's handsome face.

"Vive la Republique!" shouted Francis, throwing his arm around Pelven's neck.

"You see, Commandant," said Hoche, "that the confidence and affection of your Lieutenant are unshaken, but you will excuse me if I feel differently. You are guilty of the most excessive imprudence, if of nothing worse. The truth is, we have — thanks to you, — a Bourbon once more among us. It is not necessary to enumerate the misfortunes which are sure to come in his train, but how is it possible for me to believe, that your suspicions were not aroused during your long journey?"

A pin-hole letting in the tiniest shaft of light upon a drama by which we have been duped, is often enough to enable us to understand a mystery that has puzzled us for a long time.

Thus it was that Hervé's memory instantly recalled all the equivocal situations of his journey, the extreme

reserve of the Scotch woman, the scenes at the château de la Groac'h, the words, and strange persistence of Bellah, that night among the Druid stones, and finally the person who had followed Mademoiselle de Kergant in her nocturnal expedition. This last recollection penetrated the wounded heart of the young man more deeply than any other.

"General," he said, "I have been bejuggled in the most shameful manner. My sister is a mere child, who thought the whole affair an excellent joke. As to the others——"

Commandant Pelven finished his sentence with a prolonged shake of the head, and an expression indicating the bitterest resentment.

The General went toward a window, where he stood some minutes, with his eyes fixed on vacancy and a frown on his brow, as if undecided and irresolute; then, turning round, he said abruptly:

"Suppose I were to give you your liberty, Pelven, what use would you make of it? Of course you see that you could no longer remain on my staff. Now, then, what would you do?"

"I would go straight to the Chouans, straight to the Prince, if Prince there be."

"Are you mad?"

"I should resume my rank and my title," continued the young man, hotly, "for I should require all the privileges which they would give, and I should say to the hero of this comedy, played at my expense:

Monsieur, or Monseigneur, I care little which, for I am a gentleman like yourself—I wish to hold you to account, for the perilous position in which you have placed, not my life, for that after all, is of small import, but my honor.”

“Upon my word, Hervé,” and the General laughed heartily and deliciously, a laugh that had in it unmistakable evidence of his youth, “upon my word,” he repeated, “if you are mad, I like your kind of madness. I am not a man of high birth, as you well know, but I can appreciate your audacity, and your determination. This project is preposterous, but I am quite sure that I should do the same, were I in your place, and therefore I shall not oppose it. Whatever the result may be, I am sure your friends will hold you blameless; is not that so, Francis?”

“I shall go with him,” said Francis, quickly, “I wish to see the ladies of the court.”

“Indeed! I think you will require my permission first. You, Pelven, will take your sword, but I advise you to discard your uniform. You must also take good care of your unfortunate pass, as without it you cannot reach these gentlemen; wait a moment,” continued the General, writing a couple of lines rapidly on a square of paper. “Hide this in the lining of your coat, as you may need it with the Republic.”

“I am overwhelmed by your kindness, mon General.”

“I would like you to forget the last half hour, Pelven; go now. May God guard you! I hope you leave me with no hard feelings.”

Hervé took the two hands extended by the General, and said with some emotion,

“Adieu, General. I go to purchase the right of seeing you again, and of continuing to serve you.”

“Not me, Pelven, but France, the Republic.”

“That is what I mean,” said Hervé, bowing low, with affectionate respect, and, accompanied by Francis, left the room.

A few minutes later, and Pelven and his boyish Lieutenant galloped off in the direction of Rhiems, but after going two leagues, Hervé took a cross road in order to avoid the town, which might be dangerous for him. There the two young men separated, two hours before sunset, one to return to his General-in-chief, the other to incur all the perils, toward which he was impelled, contrary to all prudence, by the combined sentiments of a man who had been trifled with **and** **insulted**, and by those of a jealous lover.

CHAPTER IX.

A SOLITARY JOURNEY.

THE next day, at the same hour of the afternoon, Commandant Pelven, in undress uniform, was riding on the road from Plélan to Ploërmel. He was urging on his horse, that he might reach the latter village before the storm which darkened the sky should break. Black clouds were sweeping up from the horizon, not a leaf stirred, but at intervals the dust on the road showed large drops of water. The whole country lay in that uneasy silence, that solemn calm in which Nature seems to wrap herself at the approach of danger. Suddenly a flash of lightning tore the clouds apart, a terrible clap of thunder reverberated through the air, and at the same moment rain and hail came down in a perfect deluge. The horse of our traveller, blinded by the rain, dazzled by the lightning, swerved to the side of the road and stopped short, then with a leap started off at full gallop.

Pelven made an ineffectual effort to restrain the animal, but finally gave up the attempt, resigning himself, with a certain pleasure, to this mad ride—when, at a turn of the road, he was nearly unseated by running into a party of some ten or more horsemen, who passed like a whirlwind. Hervé had only time to

see that they were dragoons of the Republic, and to ask them why they were riding in such hot haste; but the rapidity of the pace at which he was going, and the formidable noise of the tempest did not permit him to hear their reply. He saw, however, that one of the soldiers turned in his saddle, and made him a sign which he understood to mean that there was danger in the road he was going.

A half a league further on, Pelven saw another small party of horsemen coming toward him, with the same indications of haste. The young Commandant, who by this time had regained control of his horse, now drew up across the road, and made a sign to the fugitives—for these people had that air—to stop. The horsemen did not attempt to oppose the solitary individual who checked them, but simply divided in two parties, who, passing Hervé, met together again behind him.

“Scoundrels!” shouted the young man in his indignation. At the same moment he wheeled his horse and started in pursuit. Catching a dragoon by his floating scarf, he said with angry vehemence:

“Where the deuce are you going at this rate?”

“To Plélan—to the Republican camp.”

“And by whom are you pursued?”

“The Lord only knows, sir! They said at Ploërmel that the Chouans were coming. I did not believe it, but I followed my comrades.”

“And who are you? Where do you belong?”

"To the Humbert division, which ought to be at Quimpan now—but we were cut off from our brigade in the rout."

"Rout! Rascal, what do you mean?"

"Just that, *mon officier*—and I advise you not to walk about for your pleasure beyond Ploërmel. That is a part of the country which is just now as hot as the tropics."

"And who is in command of the Chouans?"

"Somebody who does not know what fear is, and who, moreover, is as handsome as a picture."

"But who is he, *animal*?"

"Who is he? Why the *ci-devant* Prince—their god, their idol! They say it was one of our officers who helped him land. My compliments to him!"

"Tell me," interrupted Hervé, eagerly; "tell me where the skirmish took place."

"At Pluvignæ, and another at Camois. And we did not disgrace our flag, *mon officier*. At Camois we were protected by a thick wood, and we spent twelve hours dancing from tree to tree. We had a good chance to look at our enemy, I assure you. I saw their dear Prince at my ease. I even heard him say that our soldiers were the bravest he had ever seen."

"That was a compliment, certainly; but where are the Blues now?" said Hervé, gravely.

"Where are they?" repeated the dragoon. "Who can say. I only know, *mon officier*, that they have all disappeared — infantry, cavalry, and all. The very

cannon they took, and the ammunition have one and all been apparently swallowed up in the earth. There is not a brace of them left. The country is as peaceful as a summer morning, but we feel as if we were walking on a volcano. Are you not going with us, *mon officier*?"

"No," answered Hervé. "And you, my friend, had better make haste out of this rain."

The dragoon, carrying his hand to his hat, took from Pelven with the other the piece of silver, which was a great rarity in these days, and went off at full gallop.

A half hour later, the young Commandant leaped from his horse before an inn on the roadside, a gunshot from Ploërmel, whose modest façade was decorated with the traditional bush, this time in the form of a branch from a pear tree.

Entrusting his horse to a boy in sabots, who examined him with manifest suspicion, Pelven entered the kitchen of the inn, where three peasants were seated in front of a huge chimney, talking in a low voice, but with great excitement. They rose respectfully, ceased speaking, and withdrew, after each looking at the uniform worn by Hervé with most unfriendly glances. The hostess, a woman of about forty, strongly built and with a bright color in her full face, had not at first seemed over pleased with the guest sent her by heaven and the storm, but by degrees she was conquered by the young man's handsome face and by the politeness with which

he addressed her, and her countenance softening into a smile, she finally said she would do all she could for the gentleman. Here she corrected herself and said hastily, "for the worthy citizen."

While his supper was being prepared by this woman, Hervé took his seat on one of the benches in the chimney corner, and while he dried his boots, asked what was going on in that part of the country, to which the discreet matron replied, that there was nothing new, nothing worth repeating; as for herself, she thought it best not to talk too much, but to mind her own business.

Quite disposed to agree with her on this point, Hervé replied that he was only a traveller who had no intention of extorting from her any secrets, and that he only wished to know if there were any prospect of the Royalists arriving at Ploërmel.

The prudent hostess was not to be deluded into making any reply, however.

During supper, Hervé complimented her on her culinary talent, and on the cleanliness of everything about the house, after which he made another effort, and asked if he could travel without danger of being molested.

The hostess replied that, thanks to God, she was not in the habit of poisoning people who supped with her, and if the young gentleman, or rather the good citizen to whom she was speaking, should conclude to stop under her roof, he would see that the sheets were clean

and sweet, even if they were coarse ; as for the security of the country round Ploërmel, she was sure she could not answer, as things were going on constantly of which she knew nothing ; at the same time she should think it quite as well if the young gentleman should stay where he was, rather than continue his journey, although she knew nothing which should deter him.

Hervé was obliged to content himself with this unsatisfactory advice and information, the desultory nature of which we have endeavored to lay before our readers. He at last rose from the table, and saying to his hostess that he was going to take a little walk, and wished his room to be in readiness when he returned, he went out. He returned an hour later, bringing with him a large bundle. He paid his bill, saying that he should be off early in the morning, before any one was up, and then retired to his chamber, on the delights of which his hostess expatiated most fluently.

The next morning, when the dew drops sparkled in the fresh June sunlight, a solitary horseman was slowly moving along a high road to the west of Ploërmel. This traveller was a man in the spring time of life. A broad brimmed hat, partially concealed features which were too aristocratic to be in keeping with the coarse peasant's clothing which he wore. Instead of a whip he held a stick with a leather thong ; his appearance, except to a most suspicious observer, was that of a cattle drover on a holiday.

After going about a league, this man encountered

several peasants who were carrying milk to the town, and who looked after him with some curiosity. After this, however, he met not another human being. The few houses he passed, were closed and as deserted as if a pestilence had swept over the land. In this strange solitude, surrounded by the work of man's hands, the traveller felt something of that solemnity and awe that one feels in going through a cemetery. This sentiment was mingled with a certain alarm, for more than once, as the young man looked around, he fancied that behind the tall reeds, with their yellow blossoms, he caught sight of a moving figure.

His surprise increased and his heart grew heavier when he reached a little village lying on the border of a pretty, running stream, and found it utterly deserted. The houses were all standing and intact, but no smoke issued from the roofs; no faces appeared at the windows, and not a sound came from within. The traveller heard nothing except the clang of the iron shoes of his horse on the badly-paved streets. He asked himself what had become of the infirm and the sick — the old people and young children — and shuddered at the terrible sincerity and energy of the convictions or sentiments which had demanded and obtained so violent and unanimous a sacrifice. He looked through the wide open doors with sad curiosity; at all these desolated hearthstones, these deserted shops and silent work-rooms; he saw the empty cradle of the child by the side of the grandmother's vacant chair,

and near it the spinning-wheel, now dumb and motionless, as were all the other sweet symbols of domestic peace. His heart sank within him at the sight, and it seemed to him as if he were riding through one of those cities suddenly overtaken by the eruption of a volcano, from which after the lapse of centuries, the winding-sheet of ashes had been removed.

The horseman hurried through the village, and crossed the bridge, on one of the parapets of which, stood a stone cross, the only indication of that hope which brings consolation in despair. He dismounted after he had passed a château, whose moss-grown towers would have attracted his attention, and excited his interest at any other time. He took his saddle from his horse, and allowed the animal to graze at will on the rich grass that grew by the roadside, under some magnificent oak trees, and sitting by the side of a sparkling brook, the young man took out his lunch and began to eat it, listening occasionally to ascertain if there were really no sounds except those of the insects rejoicing in the sunshine. A half hour later he was again on his way, but hesitated when he came to two roads, as if uncertain which to take; but, after some little hesitation, he took that which led in a southerly direction.

Two leagues farther on, the traveller saw on his right the ruins of a burned village, and perceiving a thick cloud of smoke arising from a meadow near by, he rode toward it in spite of the obstinate refusal of his horse, and pushing away with his stick the branches of

a thorny hedge all covered with white blossoms, he saw under a mass of smouldering straw, a hideous pile of men and horses. This spectacle drew from him an exclamation of horror and disgust. Turning hastily, he fled from the accursed spot. Meanwhile time was passing, the sun was already high in the heavens, and the heat was intense. After leaving these odious indications of the vicinity of man, the traveller went on with more caution, drawing his rein occasionally to listen. But around him the silence was disturbed only by the rustle of the grass in the gentle breeze, and by the sound of the frogs in a distant marsh. By degrees, becoming accustomed to this almost fantastic isolation amid a cultivated country, he ceased to think of it and fell into a profound reverie. He had reached the top of a long and heavy hill, when a sound like the breaking of a branch attracted his attention, and caused him to look toward a group of tall beeches, which he was about to pass.

Seeing nothing to excite his suspicions, either under the trees, or among the heavy masses of verdure clothing their branches, he was riding quietly on, when, suddenly, a second thought caused him to look back, and he was startled by seeing a man's face among the leaves. One eye was closed, and the other glittered with a ferocious light. At the same moment he saw the muzzle of a gun.

"Hollo!" shouted the horseman. "Are Vendéans shot down in this way about here?"

“Ah!” answered the man in the birch tree, “that is quite a sensible question!” and as he opened his eye and moved his gun a little, he said: “Can you tell me what time it is?”

This question, simple as it was, considerably embarrassed the adventurous traveller, for he at once realized that he was expected to reply with a pass-word of which he was absolutely ignorant. If he had any doubt on that point it was speedily removed, by seeing the eye of his interrogator close again, and the gun moved back to its original position.

“You are making a mistake, my man,” said the traveller, with that coolness which extreme peril often elicits; “and a mistake which you are certain, sooner or later, to regret. I come from Anjou. How can you expect me to know what is going on here. Come down,” he continued, in a tone of authority; “come down, and I will show you a pass I have from your people.”

As he finished speaking, he drew from his vest pocket a paper, which he shook with an imperious gesture.

The mysterious personage in the beech tree responded to this invitation, with an eagerness tempered largely by prudence. As he emerged from his leafy screen, the traveller saw that he wore the costume of a Breton peasant. He glided down the tree, and slowly approaching the stranger, gun in hand, he took at a safe distance the paper presented by the horseman; he

read with attention, and not without difficulty, the two lines written upon it. The expression of savage distrust, which had darkened his features, gave place to a look of joy; he gave a knowing wink as he returned the paper, and taking off his hat, he said with great respect:

“And my master, Monsieur Charette, is well, then?”

“Perfectly well, my man. You took me for a spy, it seems?”

“Yes, sir, I did; a spy from the Blues.”

“And what were you doing in that tree?”

The peasant shook his head with a knowing air, and smiling from ear to ear, he answered almost in a whisper: “I was watching for them.”

“But the Blues are way off; I left them at Vitré day before yesterday.”

“But they are on their way here, sir; and coming, too, at full speed. The people down there,” and the peasant pointed to the North, “heard it yesterday, and they moved away in the night. And where, sir, may you be going? to Varennes?”

“No; to Pluvignæ; I expect to find the officers there to whom I bear dispatches from the General.”

“What officers do you mean?”

“Why — what are their names?” and the horseman hesitated as he laid his hand on the shoulder of the Chouan.

“Fleur-de-Lis, you mean?”

“Ah! yes; precisely.”

"But he is at Kergant—you are going away from him!"

"At Kergant? Fleur-de-Lis?" and the horseman withdrew his hand hastily.

"Yes, and Monsieur George, too; in fact, pretty much all of our chiefs are there now."

"Then I must retrace my steps. I was told that you occupied Pluvignæ."

"Yes, at first; but that is all changed now," answered the peasant, with a little frown, as if trying to understand a matter beyond his comprehension. "They will tell you all that, though, when you get there."

"And how do you all like Fleur-de-Lis?"

"Holy Virgin! How do we like Fleur-de-Lis!" and the Breton lifted his hat from his head, and in his enthusiasm, waved it in the air. "He is an angel of light. You will see him, sir; he looks like the Saint George that hangs over the grand altar in our parish church. Good Heavens! how brave he is. The balls of the Blues have no terrors for him—he minds them no more than he does the flowers in the hedge—he has a great black horse, too, who eats powder as others eat oats. When the Blues see him coming they cry out, 'Here is the devil!' and you should see them run! About fifty went by yesterday morning; and," added the peasant, with a sinister smile, "there are seven or eight now lying in Marie Brech's meadow, a league from here. Perhaps, sir, you smelled the roast as you passed?"

At this question the traveller started; his eyes flashed and his hand convulsively clutched the stick in his hand. These equivocal signs did not escape the Chouan, who, drawing back a few steps, fixed his eyes on the agitated face of his companion.

"You fill me with regret," the horseman said, presently; "regret that I did not get here earlier. I should have much liked to say a few words to these rascals. As you may imagine, I should like to have had my turn in fighting for the good cause."

"Ah! master, I fancy you will have that pleasure where you are going," answered the peasant, with a laugh.

"That is what I rely on, my man; and I hope we shall meet again. Good night now, for I must push on, as I do not care to arrive too late at Kergant."

"But it will be pitch dark before you can get there, even if you knew the cross-cuts, which you don't. But perhaps I can make you understand. You must go back as far as Marie Brech's meadow, and on your left you will see a little lane — go straight on as far as that goes."

"Thanks, my good man. And now let me look you full in the face, for I want to recognize you when we meet again."

"And here," said the Chouan, breaking off a branch from the beech tree, "stick this in your cap, for there are more guns about than you suspect."

The horseman obeyed this prudent suggestion,

thanked his dangerous friend once more, and rode down the hill, on the summit of which he had held that perilous interview, which had turned out so much better than he at one time had anticipated. At the corner of the fence, where lay the unfortunate soldiers, he found a narrow path running between two deep ditches, and so suggestive of ambuscades that he would have hesitated if the branch from the beech tree had not seemed to him a safeguard against surprises of this kind. The rest of his journey was marked by no incidents of special importance. He passed two or three villages, ruined and deserted; and more than once heard among the bushes on the roadside, movements and voices which occasioned him no little uneasiness; twice he had occasion to exchange a friendly word with peasants who seemed to be devoting themselves to agricultural pursuits with an energy that was not accounted for by the results; but he met with no obstacle to his progress; nevertheless twilight had given place to darkness, when the horseman entered the avenue of centenarian trees that led to the Kergant manor.

When he reached the middle of this avenue, he dismounted and fastened his horse to a post of a fence near an open meadow. This fence he clambered over, crossed the meadow diagonally, and getting over a ditch, whose weak places he seemed to know perfectly, he found himself in an immense garden extending under the left wing of the château. The lights from

the many windows served to point out the narrow paths, with their borders of box. Here the young man stopped and seemed to hesitate; soon, however, he resumed his progress, carefully avoiding the luminous zone, but his step was less rapid now, and his movements indicated a certain aimlessness of purpose. His eyes eagerly pierced the darkness for familiar objects — each tree, each garden seat, statue or vase of flowers, he approached and even touched with a lingering movement of almost tenderness. It was as if every corner was associated in his memory, with some period of his life, to which he looked back with infinite regret.

A gentle slope led him through a little grove of elms to a part of the garden that went by the name of "the wood," where nature had been left pretty much to herself, although certain vistas cut through the black masses of fir trees, allowed the starry skies to be seen. The murmur of running water was heard, coming from a leaping, brawling brook which, passing through the wood, was lost in a great marsh in the distance. The young man followed for some rods one of the winding paths, and was standing on a rustic bridge thrown over the brook, when a sound of voices came to his ear; so distinct was it, that those who spoke must be, he knew, within ten feet. He looked around, and at last saw at the end of the path, a bench under a tree, on which sat a woman wrapped in an ample cloak, the hood of which was drawn over her head. Against a tree, close at her side, leaned a man of slight figure. This man was speaking.

"It is unreasonable and ungrateful," said the unknown, in a voice of caressing sweetness: "you know how entirely, and in what way my life is occupied. I have great and formidable duties. Were I to neglect them, you would be the first to reproach me, or you are not the woman I suppose you to be. And how can you expect me to be other than distant at times, when I have so much on my mind?"

"Yes," interrupted the young woman, in a voice, choked either through prudence or emotion; "yes, I admit all that, but it is not necessary to deceive me, is it? You do not know, you never can know, what my sufferings are, when this thought comes to me —"

"But all this is very foolish," answered the unknown; "foolish and groundless! I know you no longer. Your intrepid heart and courageous spirit seem to be crushed under the most puerile presentiments."

"You would never know me again, Fleur-de-Lis, were you to deceive me."

"But I love you, my proud child! I love you most dearly."

These words, and the tone in which they were pronounced, seemed to have restored to the young girl some little confidence. She allowed her hand to be taken by the person whom she had called Fleur-de-Lis, and who now began to talk to her with impassioned eagerness, but in so low a tone that only she could distinguish his words. At a noise from among the

trees she started up, and, seizing the arm of her companion, murmured in a voice hoarse with terror, "My father!"

At the same moment a new sound struck their ears, for both were now listening with acute attention; it was like the snap of a trigger of a gun. The lady started back, covered her face with both hands, and held her breath.

After some moments of anxiety, Fleur-de-Lis said: "It was nothing, dear. Night and a wood are always full of inexplicable sounds."

As he spoke, he led the lady down the path, and over the little bridge.

After they had passed, the stranger, who had witnessed this mysterious scene, stepped from behind the colossal trunk of a fir tree that had sheltered him, and murmured, as he thrust his pistol back into his breast:

"It was not my sister! It was she! I must wait."

CHAPTER X.

SUPPER AT THE CHATEAU.

THAT same evening the dining-room in the Château de Kergant, a vast apartment, wainscotted with oak, was occupied by some twenty guests, seated at a table covered with a sumptuous supper. Mademoiselle Andréé Pelven, with more grace than dignity, sat on the right of the Marquis de Kergant, while the Canoness, with more dignity than grace, occupied the chair at her brother's left.

Mademoiselle Bellah de Kergant, benignant and smiling like a young Queen, was in the centre of one side of the table opposite the Marquis, watching with sedulous care that the comfort of their guests was attended to, and occasionally giving an order *sotto voce* to the lacqueys in deep crimson, who were busy behind her.

The lacqueys, as well as their crimson liveries, seemed singularly out of place amid this civil war; but the Canoness Ellinore was one of those who countenanced no lapses in such matters. She had often reproached the unfortunate Queen for her disregard of etiquette and ceremony which, as the Canoness insisted, had really been the fundamental cause of the French Revolution; her admiration for the Roman Senators

who awaited the enemy, seated on their ivory chairs, was immense; and the crimson liveries of the lacqueys were obstinately kept up at her own expense. Monsieur de Kergant, though by no means insensible to the puerility of all this in such times, allowed his sister to do as she pleased, because of a certain grandeur of soul, which she had more than once evinced in hours of peril.

The supper was served in the same careful style as of yore, the table blazed with lights and glittered with glass and silver; the china upon it was exquisite, and the viands were served with a profusion characteristic then, as now, of Brittany.

If the Marquis and his sister, had hoped to forget the present, and recall the pleasant entertainments of their best years, their success was small, for the actors about the table did not second the illusion. More than one of them wore the coarse clothing of peasants, and hands habituated to the plough, lifted the emblazoned silver. The Marquis called, and with reason, many of his guests, heroes, but a few years before he would hardly have recognized them as men. Thus it was that this Revolution, which the old gentleman fought without, with such intense desperation, had placed her foot on his very hearth-stone — he received her at his table, and showed her every honor!

The plebeian coiffe of Alix, the daughter of Kado, the guide, was to be seen at the further end of the table, and added another graceful touch to the con-

trasts of the picture. Monsieur de Kergant, of a most generous and genial nature, when his prejudices were not excited, wished to evince by this condescension the gratitude he felt for the devotion this young girl had shown to her companions in exile. The punctilious Canoness could not conceal from herself that this mixture of costumes and of manners, was fatal to the traditions of her house. She fully realized the deteriorating influence of these contradictions on her lacqueys, but she consoled herself by giving to this mortification a religious coloring—she compared these repasts to those of the early Christians.

Some years ago we chanced to meet a survivor of these Chouan wars, and we learned from him what was likely to be the subject of conversation at a supper given between two of these combats, and we shall endeavor to reproduce it for our readers.

“This is a marriage feast, my dear Marquis; a Royal festivity,” said a young man who occupied the place of honor at Mademoiselle de Kergant’s side, and whose every word was received with almost exaggerated respect. “I am inclined to believe that your château is a refuge for all those illustrious cooks who have been deprived of employment by the Revolution; this supper seems to me to have been prepared by them as a token of their gratitude! Such a supper deserves a poem in its honor, although in my opinion the shorter a poem is, the better it is! Ah! Mademoiselle, you frown; I have uttered some heresy, it seems.”

"You have hurt Mademoiselle Bellah's feelings," said a young Abbe, with a refined and delicate face, who sat near the Canoness.

"My daughter, Duc, adores poetry," interposed Monsieur de Kergant.

"But I said nothing against poetry," answered he who was addressed as Duc. "I was talking of poems."

"But Monsieur," asked Bellah, with a smile, "what do you mean by poems?"

"I mean, Mademoiselle ——, I mean——, well, for example, I mean *la Henriade*, which I have never read, to be sure, but which I know to be very tedious."

"The author is a rascal," observed the Canoness, with superfluous energy; "I never read his *Henriade* myself, but I am told that Jeanne d'Arc is badly treated in it."

"Thank you, Madame," answered the young man, "for giving me another legitimate cause of dislike to the poem. As to poetry, I share Mademoiselle de Kergant's taste for it; but I am very far from admiring the many lines of unequal length which go by that name. A man is not a poet, because he avoids calling things by their right names, and because he measures his syllables with more or less facility. The dreams of a child may be poetry; a young man who loves is a poet, but under pain of ridicule he must relinquish, if he has passed his early youth, any romance in his speech. Your old Bretonne ballads, Mademoiselle, contain treasures of pure poetry."

Monsieur de Kergant was about to speak, when he saw his daughter rise to her feet, and stand with fixed eyes and pallid cheeks, gazing at a corner of the room where the door which led to the great hall, stood wide open. Half of the guests looked in the same direction with vivid surprise and some alarm imprinted on their faces. Monsieur de Kergant turned and saw Commandant Hervé, in full Republican uniform, but without a sword, standing in the doorway. The Marquis started up, and Andréé uttered a stifled cry.

"Monsieur," said Pelven, whose gentle, grave face was pale with emotion and fatigue, "I have come to ask hospitality at your hands. For motives which it is easy for you to divine, there is no longer safety for me among the Republicans. Warned in time, of the fate that was impending, I concluded that it was more foolish than courageous to struggle against this. I am an outlaw, and an exile. I come therefore, to join outlaws and exiles. If I have relied too much, sir, on your former friendship, I will go elsewhere to drag out a miserable existence."

All the guests had listened in sad silence to the words of the young officer; every eye was fixed on the Marquis, whose face had lost the genial expression aroused by the occasion, and resumed the character of noble severity more natural to it.

"Monsieur de Pelven," he said, taking a few steps toward his unexpected guest; but instead of finishing the phrase with the solemnity indicated by this begin-

ning, he seized the young man's hand, and drew him to his breast.

"Hervé," he cried, in an agitated voice, "my son, my child, you are welcome!"

This reception, which was entirely unexpected, troubled Hervé sorely. The warm embrace of the old man chilled the youth, until every drop of blood in his veins was turned to ice. The thought of the double part he was playing for the first time in his life, filled him with remorse, and while he stammered forth a few troubled words of gratitude and affection, his brown skin grew flushed, but meeting the eyes of the person who sat at the right of Mademoiselle de Kergant, he instantly recovered his self-possession, and his determination was stronger than ever.

Meanwhile, the Marquis turned toward his guests. "Gentlemen," he said, "this is the son of Comte de Pelven. He has been carried away by those Revolutionary ideas which seduced so many of our great names in the deceitful dawn of these sad days. I do not doubt that he has long since recognized his mistake and deplored his illusions. Circumstances which you know, have at last broken those chains which an exaggerated sentiment of honor had forged for him. I beg of you to welcome him as the son of my old age."

The guests replied by shouts, and the clink of their wine glasses; one among them, however—he who seemed, in spite of his youth—to be first among them—contented himself with a grave and polite bow.

Hervé, on the invitation of the Marquis, took his place at André's side; she, poor child, was in such a state of excitement that she did not know whether to laugh or to cry. Mademoiselle de Kergant, more reserved, or gifted with more penetration, had given to the companion of her childhood, no other welcome than a sad cold smile, and the eyes with which she, from time to time looked at him, were full of doubt and anxiety.

An embarrassed silence followed the tumult occasioned by the arrival of the Republican. Mademoiselle de Kergant's neighbor, alone looked perfectly at ease and undisturbed, and did his best to renew the conversation, which the presence of this hated uniform seemed to have frozen on the lips of those who sat around the table. The peculiar voice, sonorous and sweet, struck Hervé's ears, and the young Commandant felt absolutely certain that he had before him, that mysterious chief, the enemy and the rival he had come to seek—that Royalist hero, who, in such a brief space of time, had caused all Brittany to ring with his name. He watched him with sombre curiosity. He was of as small a stature as was consistent with masculine beauty; he might be anywhere between twenty-five and thirty, his hair was dark, growing thickly around a broad, white brow, his mouth was almost feminine in its delicacy, but this charm, almost unappreciable in a man, was redeemed by the bold lines of chin and nose, and moreover, by the expression of his eyes, frank, haughty and fearless, to a degree.

Pelven had expected to find in the face of the unknown, some of the characteristic features of an illustrious family; his patrician education had given him such a thorough and minute information in regard to the *personnel* of the Bourbon house, that he at once felt certain that no one of the names given to this young chief really belonged to him. However this might be, his attitude and manner of speech was of one in authority. No one was disposed to question his right to his princely ways, and he used this right with exquisite politeness. He was at once keen, quick and affable, addressing each person in turn, and showing a marvellous appreciation of the peculiarities of each. He was a man whom nature had richly endowed, and who united a certain fascination of grace and ease to that of strength, and who spoke with equal eloquence to soldiers and to women. The medal had its reverse side, however; an acute and delicate observer would have been startled by the brilliancy of so many resources and qualities, and would have concluded that there was nothing left to discover. It seemed more natural to accept this young man as a master than as a friend.

Hervé could not refrain from starting, when he heard himself addressed by this person, whom we will designate as Fleur-de-Lis.

“Monsieur de Pelven,” he said, lifting his glass, “will you allow me to drink to the happy accident, so thoroughly appreciated by ourselves, which allows us to claim you as one of us?”

"Monsieur," answered Hervé, trying to smile, "unless I am greatly mistaken thanks are due to you for this rather than to me."

"I trust, Monsieur le Comte," said Fleur-de-Lis, in a cordial tone, "that you have forgiven the liberty I took, in disposing of your services without your knowledge."

"But," answered Hervé, gaily, "you can't expect me to forgive a certain blow."

"Which does not lie heavy on my conscience, thank Heaven! George, my friend, answer for your own evil deeds, I beg of you; your heavy hand must not separate Monsieur de Pelven and myself. Here is your enemy, my dear Comte," added the young man, indicating to Hervé a broad shouldered peasant with a round head, whose loosely tied cravat allowed a Hercules-like throat to be seen. "I am sure you will forgive George."

"But, Monsieur le Comte," said George, with a loud laugh, "it was a question of safety for us all, and a blow of the fist does not disgrace a man after all."

"I did not say that it disgraced me, my friend, I said that it hurt me! I suppose, Monsieur George, that you were one of the dames who were washing their linen that night in the valley de la Groac'h. May I, without indiscretion, venture to ask the motive of that strange masquerade?"

"Ah! don't speak of it," said Fleur-de-Lis; "these Bretons are so brave that they are foolhardy. They

wished to welcome me by this jest, but they gave us the greatest trouble in the world."

"But, how was it," asked Hervé, "that you escaped with impunity from our fire?"

"Ah," said George in reply, "you must admit that my boys had considerable courage. I have always told them to throw themselves flat on the ground to let the balls pass over their heads; you may remember with what precision they executed this manoeuvre."

Mademoiselle de Kergant rose from the table as these words were spoken; she took the hand offered by Fleur-de-Lis, and, followed by all the guests, entered a neighboring *salôn*, the walls of which were hung with family portraits. Hervé, seeing once more those well-known faces, witnesses of his childish sports, and protectors of his peaceful years, felt a new pang added to the griefs and agitations of the present hour. While the various guests, scattered about the *salôn*, or collected in little groups, indulged in those expansive conversations which are apt to follow a good meal, he withdrew to one of the embrasures of a deep window. Presently, Bellah approached, talking, as she came, with several persons, then, leaving them with an appearance of carelessness, she drew near the window.

"Hervé," she said, quickly, "what are you doing here?" her voice was almost inaudible.

"God knows," answered the young man, "that the most ignominious death would have been preferable, in my eyes, had I had the least suspicion of what I was to see—of what I was to hear!"

"Is this an enigma?" returned Bellah, with that same hauteur which was one of her great charms.

"An hour ago, Bellah, I was in the pine grove."

"In the pine grove?" repeated Bellah, meeting Hervé's reproachful gaze with frank and limpid eyes. Her father's voice calling her, cut short this explanation; the girl lightly shrugged her shoulders, lifted her lovely eyes to heaven, and slowly and pensively moved away.

When we are astonished at the facility with which a clever man allows himself to be deceived by the woman whom he loves, we forget the natural inclination of our hearts, which is to hope. It is our own weak hands which present to a woman the veil with which she blinds us. A single word, a gesture of surprise, was quite enough, to induce Hervé to forget the proofs which five minutes before, he had looked upon as irrefutable. He remembered the pride and the innocence of his adopted sister, he read in her frank eyes, the purity and honesty of her soul, and forgot that the perfection of hypocrisy, was to adorn a treacherous brow with this deceptive aureole, and he already began to reproach himself for having insulted, with his vague suspicions, a creature so worthy of respect.

Yet this scene in the fir grove had positively taken place; of this there was no question. This idea plunged Hervé into new anxieties, and at this moment a woman's dress swept against the curtain behind which he was half concealed, he lifted his head and recog-

nized the pale, energetic face of Alix. Unreasonable as might be the thought that now occurred to the young man, he grasped at it with eagerness, but again looking toward an animated group around Bellah and Fleur-de-Lis, Hervé was convinced that the young Royalist hero, if he had not the claims to his hatred with which he had endowed him, had not himself to blame, for it was easy to see that Bellah's presence excited him, and that he did his utmost to please her. It was to her that his eyes dedicated his every word, to her he displayed all his wealth, environed her by all his prestige, as by a magic circle. Bellah was evidently under the charm, although it was not possible to judge of the depth of the impression upon her. Hervé read in the eyes of the young girl, a certain passionate admiration which revived all his doubts and all his anger.

Recalling, with a start, the aim of his journey to Kergant, he accused himself of wearing his mask longer than was necessary. He went toward the group of which his rival was the centre, and taking advantage of a momentary silence, he said calmly :

“Monsieur, will you kindly listen to me for a few moments, before you regard me as fully committed to a cause which you represent so well? I am not, to be sure, in a position which would enable me to put a price on my services, but my character should be clearly defined, both for your satisfaction and my own. I believe, Monsieur, that I do not err in attributing to

you all the authority that is required to give judgment without appeal, in all matters that concern me."

The young Royalist's piercing eyes had been fixed on Hervé's face while the young man spoke; a singular smile appeared on his lips as he replied.

"I am at your orders, Monsieur de Pelven, and you have but anticipated my own wishes. The evening is clear, I believe, would you like to walk in the garden for a half hour? We could talk there at our ease."

Hervé bowed an assent.

"But, my dear host," resumed Fleur-de-Lis, addressing the Marquis de Kergant, "are we to treat Monsieur Pelven as a prisoner? I notice that he wears no sword, which to a brave soldier like himself must be a source of great mortification. Pray do not allow this to continue."

"You remind me, Monsieur le Duc," answered the Marquis, "that the time has come for me to restore to Hervé a portion of his heritage, which I have hitherto withheld."

As he spoke the Marquis went to a table and took from a velvet case a sword, which he presented to Hervé.

"My dear boy," he said, "this is yours, the sword of your father should be entrusted only to a loyal hand. I give it to you with a feeling of confidence, knowing that it will never be used against our Holy Cross, nor against our sacred Fleur-de-Lis."

At these words, the young Duc smiled again.

"I will be Monsieur de Pelven's guaranty," he said, "that this confidence is well placed—and that it is very apropos," he added in a lower voice, turning on his heel and going toward the door. Pelven buckled on the sword, thanking the Marquis with the cold reserve that had characterized his conduct toward that gentleman ever since his arrival, and which Monsieur de Kergant explained as the natural result of this compulsory return.

The two young men crossed a square hall hung around with old armor, and traversing a bridge thrown over the moat, they found themselves in the garden of the château. By a tacit agreement they continued to walk on rapidly, as if they had not yet reached a place solitary enough for the explanation coveted by both. As they approached the fir grove, they heard quick steps behind them. They stopped, and in a moment more Mademoiselle de Kergant joined them.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," she said, breathlessly. "Monsieur Hervé, I must speak to you."

Hervé could not restrain a gesture of violent annoyance. "Mademoiselle," he replied, "you must excuse me. You heard the request I made to Monsieur—to Monsieur le Duc. He kindly granted it, and he would have a right to accuse me of great discourtesy were I now to postpone ——"

"Monsieur le Duc," interrupted Bellah, quickly, "is too courteous himself, not to yield to my wishes."

"Most assuredly," said Fleur-de-Lis, in a tone of

constraint most unusual to him. "Mademoiselle de Kergant may always rely on the most absolute submission from me, but Monsieur de Pelven is unjust toward me, if he supposes himself to be the only person disturbed by this delay."

Bowing profoundly, as he concluded this sentence, the young chief turned down the next path, and left Bellah alone with Hervé.

Mademoiselle de Kergant walked still further away as if to avoid all possibility of being heard by any one but him to whom she spoke.

"Hervé," she said, abruptly, standing still and laying her hand on his arm, "this must not be."

"What do you mean?" asked Hervé, "I do not think you understand this matter."

"Better, perhaps, than you think, and it must not be, not if I am obliged to go to my father and tell him all. Hervé, do not force me to this horrible step."

"This horrible step, as you term it, is most useless, since one word from your lips will take from me all desire and all reasonable pretext for pushing this affair further. If you refuse to utter this word, you will consign me to death with your own hands, for you know your father. Bellah, I saw a woman, two hours ago, in the arms of that man — speak!"

Mademoiselle de Kergant tottered; she caught at the pedestal of a statue, near which they stood, she gasped for breath, and without lifting her eyes, said slowly:

"That woman was myself."

“You! good Heavens!” cried Hervé, recoiling in absolute terror. “Then,” he added, after a brief silence — “for I choose to have the avowal from your own lips — then this man is your lover?”

Bellah, whose attitude expressed shame and mortification, hid her face in her hands, and her voice faint and low, murmured:

“Yes, he is my lover.”

“Then farewell,” said Hervé.

“Where are you going,” cried Mademoiselle de Kergant, wildly seizing Hervé’s hand, “what will become of you? what shall I say to my father?”

“Say to him that I came here as a spy, call me whatever name you please, it matters little to me. Adieu.”

Hervé gently shook off the hand which sought to detain him, and went away with a rapid step, while the young girl sank on her knees before the pedestal, her hair streaming over her shoulders, and her breast heaving with sobs, the image of a suppliant at the foot of an antique altar.

CHAPTER XI.

A DEED OF DARING.

PELVEN leaped the hedge that separated the garden from the meadow, and returned to the dark avenue where his horse still stood. The poor animal, forgotten amid all these anxieties, uttered a faint neigh as he recognized his master, and stretched out his weary head as if eager for a caress. Every man who has known one of those never-to-be-forgotten hours of life, marked by treachery and ingratitude, will understand how deeply any evidence of attachment from the humblest creature goes to the heart. Hervé murmured some confused words, and smoothed the mane of his faithful companion, then throwing himself on the turf, dashed the tears from his eyes.

After some minutes given to bitter meditation, the young man stood erect as if to face Destiny. There is a certain satisfaction in knowing the worst, for at least those painful alternations of hope and despair, so wearing to the soul, are then over. But wherever Hervé looked he saw only grief, such as it seemed almost impossible for him to endure. Both Past and Future seemed to have crumbled under his feet — his dreams of noble activity, of services rendered, of glory won — all those consolations, in fact, to which a man turns in

order to forget a useless weakness, were all denied him. Contrary to all expectation, his mad enterprise had saved neither his love nor his honor, but had left him his life. Alone in this inimical country, what hope had he, that he could by any gallant act reawaken the esteem of his family and friends. What was left for him now to do? He was equally suspected by both parties, and was regarded as a traitor by all. Under what tent or in what hut, should he, a refugee from both camps, seek shelter for a night?

Wrapped in these futile reflections, the young man wandered to the end of the avenue, when he suddenly heard the measured step of soldiers. Before he had time to take flight, he was surrounded by bristling bayonets and felt the point of a sabre at his throat.

"Surrender! Whoever you are, surrender!" said a quick, imperative voice.

"Francis!" cried Pelven.

"Hervé!" ejaculated the Lieutenant, dropping his sabre and seizing his friend's hand; "Hervé! God be praised! I never hoped to see you alive again."

"Francis!" repeated Hervé, unable to recover from his surprise, "what does this mean? Whence come you? Who is with you? Where are you going?"

"We are all here," said a hoarse voice, "Colibri and I. We have all come in search of our Commandant, or of Death!"

"Ah! my good old Bruidoux!" cried Hervé, "you did not believe, then, that I had betrayed you?"

"Didn't we all swallow that adder of a Scotch-woman, Commandant? All but Colibri, who was most astonishing for his years."

"But, in Heaven's name, Francis," interrupted Hervé, "how did you contrive to follow me so promptly, and get here, all of you, alive? Where is the army? Where is the General?"

"Further off than I like, Commandant. But, tell me, did you get into the château!"

"Yes, I got in, and found all those there of whom I was in search. But in all other respects I failed, utterly and entirely. Do not say any more on this subject, but tell me, I beg of you, all that has happened since we parted, for I do not yet know whether I am to rejoice or to grieve over this rencontre."

Francis, after leading the Commandant a little aside, told him that the very night of his departure the Republican army had broken camp—the principal corps was already at Ploërmel; three battalions, among which was that to which Hervé belonged, had even pushed their reconnoissance as far as the deserted village, through which Pelven had passed that morning. The story went that the forces of the Whites were concentrating a little further toward the North, at Pontivy. The General, anxious in regard to Hervé's safety, advised Francis, who was as anxious as himself, to do all that lay in his power, short of positive imprudence. Francis, therefore, seeing himself only three short leagues from Kergant, resolved to go there

during the night, accompanied by some sixty men, among whom he included, at their earnest solicitation, all those who had acted as escort to the emigrés. This small body of men, marching through this deserted country, had met with no obstacle whatever. Francis questioned the young Commandant closely, and asked if the garrison at the château was large.

Hervé answered that there was no indication of a garrison, either at the château or in the vicinity, and that no one appeared to expect the approach of the Republican army, for at least fifteen of the Royalist officers had supped at the château with the greatest gayety and tranquillity. He added some details in regard to Fleur-de-Lis, and said that in his opinion the real name of this person did not justify the apprehensions of the Commander-in-Chief. "And what do you propose to do now?" was the question with which Hervé concluded.

"I was thinking, Commandant, if it were not possible for us to lay our hands on this nest of rebels—the capture of this Fleur-de-Lis, would be a great feather in our caps."

"But it is impossible!" said Hervé, eagerly.

"Impossible! And why? Nothing would be more simple with all you have discovered, and I am mistaken if we are not neglecting our duty, if we fail to avail ourselves of this opportunity."

"And do you pretend, sir, to teach me my duty?" cried Pelven.

“Monsieur Hervé!” said the young Lieutenant, in tone of painful surprise.

“Ah! I am in the wrong — outrageously in the wrong — I admit it!” answered Hervé, whose agitation was excessive. “Our duty is, in fact, incontestable but you cannot surely expect me to lift my hand against whom? My father’s friend — the protector of my infancy? Am I to eject this old man from his own house, the house in which I was treated so long as a son? It is impossible, Francis. And these women — am I to arrest them, too? And this young man himself — whomsoever he may be — is it for me to take him prisoner? No; it would be an odious part for me to play, and I cannot do it. I repeat that it is impossible, and I will neither do it myself nor suffer you to do it — no, not if I lose my head in consequence!”

“I hope, Commandant, that you will think better of this, and will regard it with less repugnance. The General anticipated this reluctance on your part, should we meet you at Kergant. He instructed me to arrest none of the women, and as for Monsieur de Kergant, as his name is not yet openly compromised in the hostile acts which have broken the treaty, the General says that he will have permission to go to England. You see, therefore, if we use this advantage, thrown by fortune in our way, that, instead of doing Monsieur de Kergant any harm, we shall in reality prevent him from consummating his own ruin, for this desperate war will, sooner or later, surely swallow him and all who be’ong to him.”

Hervé bowed assent.

"And as to Fleur-de-Lis," continued Hervé, "you say he is not a Bourbon?"

"I am sure he is not."

"In that case, he, whomsoever he may really be, is to be treated like all the other prisoners whom the General agrees to receive, as if they had voluntarily surrendered themselves. He will simply hold them prisoners until the end of the war."

"I ought, Francis, to wish you every success in your enterprise," said Hervé, "which, if all be as you say and believe, is manifestly to the interest of those who are dear to me. Go, then, and do your duty, but, situated as I am, I have no right to take command of your men, even if I wished to do so. Do your duty, I say, but whether it be mine or not, I shall not follow you."

Francis, although evidently annoyed at this resolution, made no further objections, and, without another word, turned to issue a command to his men.

All at once Hervé changed his mind; it suddenly occurred to him, that in abstaining from playing any part in the impending drama, he was in reality obeying a sentiment of weakness rather than a sense of honor. His age and his rank would inspire a confidence that would be refused to the young Lieutenant—perhaps his presence might prevent bloodshed, and scenes which should desolate that almost paternal dwelling, that roof under which his sister had found an asylum.

Hastily saying this to Francis, Hervé added that he

would go with him, but that he should not himself take command of the expedition, nor give the smallest hint or suggestion as to the mode of procedure.

The little band then began their march. The young Lieutenant, thanks to the friendly confidences made in the past by the young Commandant, had a very clear idea of the arrangement of Kergant; he ordered Bruidoux, therefore, to cross the meadow with twenty men, and to scale the garden wall. The old château, surrounded by water, had no communication with the outer world, except by the two bridges over the moat—one into the garden, and the other into the court-yard. As soon, therefore, as these bridges were held, the Marquis and his guests were prisoners, to all intents and purposes. During this time, Pelven relieved his horse of saddle and bridle, and set him at liberty in the meadow.

The Republican column of some fifty men continued to advance cautiously in the direction of the château. There was hardly a sound, not a footfall was heard on the soft turf. Occasionally the name of Fleur-de-Lis was heard, whispered from one to another of the men, but the two young officers exchanged not one single word—both were agitated and both were silent. A soldier requires a certain amount of danger in his duties in order to make them interesting. Hervé, above all, realized that his heart was still capable of feeling new pangs, that his capacity for suffering was not yet exhausted. Never had the horror of civil war,

and the sad combinations which it entails, struck him in so dreary a light; in vain did he call his reason to his assistance; in vain did he summon to the support of his failing resolutions his conscience and his loyalty, both hitherto irreproachable. When he perceived the towers of the old manor, when he had crossed the bridge and stood within the court-yard, he could not restrain a heavy sigh, and seizing the arm of his friend with a convulsive gesture —

“Francis,” he said, in a hoarse voice, “this is a frightful moment!”

The young Lieutenant pressed the hand of his friend in mute sympathy, and bade his men quicken their pace.

Such was the security in which the inhabitants of the château were wrapped, that the Republican detachment had not only crossed the bridge, without being perceived, but had entered the court-yard through the open gate. The door of the château was also open: some ten or twelve steps led to the hall, and Francis, leaving half of his men in the court-yard, hurried up these steps, accompanied by Pelven, and followed by the rest of the soldiers. Two or three servants, who were in the hall, were so thunderstruck at this sudden invasion that they never dreamed of resistance. Francis, assuring himself that Bruidoux occupied the post that had been assigned to him, bade him use no violence, but to allow no person to leave the château; he then with several soldiers, proceeded to enter those

salôns, the lighted windows of which he had seen from the garden.

The young Lieutenant, through scruples which it is needless to explain to our readers, took all these steps without addressing a word to Hervé, who kept close to his side, like a shadow. In the room where the supper-table had been laid, they met Kado, who, seeing them and their bayonets, stood as if petrified, with wide-open eyes and lips.

"Kado," said Hervé, at last breaking the mournful silence which he had enjoined upon himself, "let there be no noise, no useless resistance; we are masters of the château."

"Good Lord!" murmured Kado, "can this be you, Monsieur Hervé? You! You, who —"

"Silence! Act with me now, and we will direct our best energies toward preventing great disasters. There must not be any bloodshed. Who is within?" and Hervé pointed to the closed door of a salon opposite.

"All the ladies, sir, the poor ladies, and Monsieur le Marquis, too."

"And the others?"

"All are gone, except Monsieur George and — but, good Lord, Monsieur Hervé, it can't be possible that you —"

"And Fleur-de-Lis?" said Hervé.

Kado wrung his hands in despair.

"If the Lieutenant agrees," added Hervé, "you,

Kado had best precede us, and give the ladies some little warning."

"Go on, Kado!" said Francis.

Kado seemed to hesitate; then, on a sign from Hervé, he opened the door of the *salôn*. He stood still just within the room, and, looking around upon the terrified women, he seemed to struggle for words; at last, in the voice of a judge pronouncing sentence of death, he said:

"The Blues are here!"

A cry of terror rang through the room—a cry that entered the very soul of Hervé, for he recognized his sister's voice. The other women showed their fright, only by the pallor that overspread their faces.

Fleur-de-Lis and George, who were indeed the only guests present, thrust their hands hastily into their breasts. Monsieur de Kergant snatched his sword that stood in a corner, and rushed forward; but the doorway was already packed with soldiers, and the two Republican officers were within the *salôn*, their swords in one hand, their hats in the other.

"Gentlemen," said Francis, "the *château* is surrounded. You are my prisoners!"

A moment of profound silence followed this declaration. Andréé, on seeing her brother, extended her arms—her slender form wavered, her delicate head drooped like a broken lily, and she fell forward. Hervé ran to lift her from the floor, but Bellah quickly prevented him. With the assistance of Alix, she placed

the inanimate form of her adopted sister on a sofa, and then hastily opened a window close at hand.

Pelven turned toward the Marquis.

"Monsieur," he said, "this misfortune is in no way due to me. I could neither foresee nor prevent it. I trust that you will do me the justice to believe this in spite of my presence here. I must also tell you that I am totally without influence—that my entreaties even are valueless. I beg of you, therefore, not to aggravate by useless resistance the present condition of things. Rely on the word of this young officer, who is in the confidence of the General-in-Chief."

"And who will assure me of your word? Who will authenticate what you say?" asked the Marquis.

"Speak, Francis," answered Hervé, "and respect those who can reply to an insult, only with words."

Pelven then withdrew to a distant corner of the room, and, leaning against the wall, stood dumb and motionless, as if resolved to take no further part in the scene enacted before him.

"Gentlemen," said Francis, in his turn, after motioning the soldiers to leave the room, "I should have hesitated to undertake this mission, if the generosity of the Commander-in-Chief, had not lightened the burden in some degree. These are the conditions which I am permitted to propose."

The young Lieutenant then proceeded to inform the Royalist chiefs, who listened without any indications of surprise, of the manner in which Hoche proposed to treat his prisoners.

"Nevertheless, gentlemen," continued Francis, "ought to make you fully understand that our General has no authority to dispose at his will, of any member of the fallen Royal family. If this declaration concerns any here present, you alone need know it."

When Francis ceased speaking, the Marquis drew his two guests aside, and began with them a whispered conference, which, however was of short duration. It was Fleur-de-Lis who finally answered the Republican officer.

"No magnanimous act on the part of your General, sir," he said, "would astonish me. His promises are facts which we accept as such. Unfortunately we know also, that above him is another power which forces him to open his hands, and let loose his captives, sometimes even, when his word has been given. Now, this is a chance which these gentlemen and I, refuse to accept. Here, Kado!"

The guard, obeying this summons, placed himself at the side of his master.

"Am I to understand, sir," said Francis, "that you indulge in the mad idea——"

"That we can defend ourselves? Yes, sir! The contest is most unequal—that fact we are ready to concede, but we intend to try."

As he spoke Fleur-de-Lis put his unsheathed sword under his left arm, and drew a pistol from his breast. His three companions—the Marquis de Kergant, the man who was known as George, and Kado, the guard, all did the same.

At these threatening movements, Mademoiselle de Kergant and Alix, the daughter of the guard, fell on their knees by the side of the sofa where Andréé lay still unconscious.

Francis recoiled and hastily drew a pistol from his breast; his brow contracted and he glanced at Hervé, who had not moved from his position, but stood with his arms crossed over his breast, calm, and to all appearance, utterly indifferent.

Meanwhile the soldiers in the next room, hearing something of what was going on, again filled up the doorway.

"Move a little, mon Lieutenant," cried one of the soldiers. "You prevent us from firing."

"Gentlemen," said Francis, in a changed voice, "I beg of you, if you have any sentiments of humanity, to think of these poor women——"

"George," cried Fleur-de-Lis, "you will see to this gentleman!" Then turning quickly toward Hervé, he continued, "Commandant Pelven, look out for yourself!"

Hervé shook his head slowly, but he did not move. Fleur-de-Lis drew back a little, a strange smile parted his lips and showed his glittering teeth; his face assumed an almost ferocious expression. He lifted his pistol, but almost instantly his hand dropped at his side as if palsied, and the pistol fell upon the floor.

A sound—extraordinary in this hour of mortal combat, the sound of a loud, prolonged laugh—froze every heart and silenced every tongue.

"It is my sister," said Monsieur de Kergant in a half whisper.

Every eye followed with anxiety the direction indicated by the trembling hand of the old man. The Canoness, standing within the embrasure of the window that had been thrown open to give Andréé air, was gazing out with a fixed expression. She continued to laugh, but her laugh was broken by convulsive sobs.

Suddenly she turned, and coming toward her brother with a tottering step, she said :

"Why do you not laugh, too? You are very strange. Have you never seen a wedding. As soon as the violins are here we will dance! These gentlemen are all invited, I presume—relatives, possibly. Jean, bring chairs. Gentlemen, I do not wish to give offence, but the night is lovely, and it would be better to dance without. The air is close here—yes—very close—and I feel—I feel—ah!"

The voice of the old lady ended in a terrible groan, then with a sharp cry she fell into her brother's arms.

Shocked by this terrible scene, the Republicans and the Royalists forgot their quarrels and their dangers. Even the energetic face of George evinced irresolution and compassion.

Fleur-de-Lis exchanged with him a few rapid words, and then shrugging his shoulders, he advanced toward Francis.

"We are ready to follow you, sir," he said; "we surrender our arms. There has been woe enough for

one night. Monsieur de Kergant will agree, I am sure?"

The Marquis, turning his head a little, made a sign of assent.

Francis expressed with politeness and feeling, the regret he felt at having been the cause of this sorrow to the family; and it was with a sinking of the heart that he realized that he must tear Monsieur de Kergant away at a time like this. He, however, knew that his duty was to allow no delay whatever. He announced, therefore, that Fleur-de-Lis, George and the Marquis, must go with him, while the other inhabitants of the château were at liberty to remain there, though it must be as prisoners for some hours at least, for they would be obliged to break up the bridges to prevent the alarm being given to the country round about. The young Lieutenant then gave the order to his men to pull down the garden bridge.

During this discussion, the Canoness had returned to consciousness, but her strange replies to the questions addressed to her by her brother indicated that her reason was seriously disturbed. Andréé, with her arms around her brother's neck, was weeping convulsively on his breast. Finding that Fleur-de-Lis and George were already out of sight, Monsieur de Kergant turned with precipitation toward Francis:

"May I see my family alone, sir?"

"I am afraid not," was the reply.

"Ah! then there will be no adieux," answered the Marquis, and he left the salôn at once.

Pelven, without a word, laid Andréé on the couch, near which Bellah, as before, mounted guard. With one imploring look, which included Bellah and his heart-broken sister, Hervé turned away and joined Francis, who had assembled all his men in the vestibule.

Kado did not choose to abandon his master, and he, with the three other prisoners, followed the detachment, while the soldiers were busy throwing into the moat the planks of which the bridge had been built. Francis asked Fleur-de-Lis to give him his word that he would make no attempt at flight.

Fleur-de-Lis replied that, on the contrary, he should do his best to escape.

“So much the worse for you, sir,” returned Francis. “You force me, then, to the most rigid surveillance.”

The double ranks of soldiers closed at once on the captives, and, as an excess of precaution, each was placed under the official guard of a soldier, who received the most rigorous orders. After these arrangements were made, the signal for departure was given, and the march began.

Lieutenant Francis, in his heart a little vain glorious on account of the success that had attended his expedition, and relieved of much of the anxiety he had felt, stepped off with a comparatively light heart, enjoying the delicious sweetness of the starry night, carelessly striking the bushes as he passed, with his sabre. Hervé, wrapped in his cloak, moved less cheerfully.

At the end of a half hour they reached a river that ran from the west due east.

"Unless I greatly mistake, Commandant," said Francis, breaking this long silence, which weighed heavily on his spirits, "this river is that which crosses the district where our advance guard is lodged. You ought to know every inch of this country.

Hervé answered that he was right, that the road running on the bank of the river led directly to the little town which he had himself passed that morning.

"And now," said Francis, "you had best take command of your men."

"Not I! for you, Francis, have acquitted yourself most nobly in this whole affair."

"Ah, Commandant, it is simply that chance has been in my favor much more than it has in—but, thank God, it has all turned out well!"

"I hope so," answered Pelven.

"Hope so?" repeated Francis. "Have you noticed anything suspicious?"

"What do you think of the sudden insanity of the old lady?"

"Do you mean that you think it feigned?"

"It was probably half real and half feigned. Women have this singular gift; but I have a notion that this crisis served as a means for conveying some secret warning or advice——"

Hervé started, and pointed to a faint light flickering over the leaves of the trees which hung over the roadside.

"What is that?" asked Francis, going toward his men.

"Nothing, my Lieutenant," answered Bruidoux; "the prisoners are merely lighting their pipes."

Francis looked around, and saw that George and Kado were indulging in the innocent amusement of smoking, and in the intense darkness their pipes looked like little fiery furnaces.

The young Lieutenant went back to Pelven. The road along which the detachment was toiling, had been for some minutes a gentle ascent, while above, rose thickly-wooded hills—on the left was the steep bank of the river.

"I am sorry," said Francis, looking around uneasily, "that we did not take the other side of the river, even if it is a longer road. This gorge begins to assume quite a cut-throat aspect. The mountain on the right is black as night, and it seems to me, though my ears may deceive me, that I hear, above the noise of the wind and the water, an odd sort of noise."

"Forbid the prisoners smoking," said Hervé, hastily.

Francis turned to give this order, but before he had taken three steps, a sudden flash illuminated the hills and the road, and at the same moment a hideous uproar arose from the heights overlooking the road. Three of the men who guarded the captives fell, George felled the fourth with a blow from his fist, and then, dashing forward, with lowered head and outstretched neck, like an incensed bull, he broke through

the soldiers, making a way for his companions, who followed quickly, and all disappeared in the darkness. Shouts arose on all sides, and a few shots were fired at random by the Republicans, without any result.

The theatre of this most unexpected attack had been chosen with marvellous discernment. It was the most elevated portion of the defile. In front, at some distance, the road was closed by a black, moving mass, sweeping down the hillside, like a torrent; at the same time a dull murmur, like the sea, rose from the hills, announcing that they were occupied by a large body of troops.

The Republicans saw that they were lost if they took one step forward, although Hervé's first idea had been to force a path, with bayonets, through the living mass, but he reflected that he had already lost two-thirds of his men, under the scathing fire from the hills, and the order was not given.

Opposite the wood and the hills, the road widened into a semi-circle, and formed a sort of promontory running out into the river—a bluff, rising some thirty feet from the water. On this point grew a few trees and a vast deal of underbrush, inky black in the darkness. It was to this spot that the Republican soldiers retreated in their first confusion and surprise.

With their back to the abyss and their faces to the invisible enemy, they waited in silent suspense.

“Lieutenant Francis,” said Hervé, just loud enough to be heard by the soldiers, “I shall take command now.”

“Good!” muttered Bruidoux; “I am delighted. I don’t mean anything against the Lieutenant, who is a nice little fellow, but, Zounds! in a time like this we want something bigger!”

Hervé ordered his soldiers to form into three lines facing the hill; then going himself to the edge of the promontory, he leaned over the edge, at the foot of which boiled the river, and seemed to be examining the side of the rock.

“Drowned or shot; that is about it, is it not?” asked Francis laconically.

“Hark! Silence!” said Hervé.

The clear ringing voice of Fleur-de-Lis rose on the air.

“Commandant Pelven,” he said, “you hear me, do you not?”

“Yes, sir; I hear you,” answered Hervé, advancing a little.

“You are surrounded, sir,” returned Fleur-de-Lis, “with the forces at my disposal. I can destroy you without the loss of one drop of blood on our side. I shall do this if you compel me, of course. We know your courage and your attachment to your duty, but duty stops at the Impossible! Surrender at once!”

“In the peculiar position which I hold, sir,” said Hervé, in reply, “I cannot reply until I have consulted with my Lieutenant. Will you give me a few moments for consideration?”

“As you please, sir,” answered Fleur-de-Lis; “there is no hurry.”

Hervé led the Lieutenant to the very edge of the promontory.

"Listen to me," he said softly, but so clearly that not a word was lost to his men, who listened with breathless attention. "We must pay these people for their *lavandières* joke, in the first place; then, again, to save our honor and our lives, it is only necessary now to do, what I have done over and over again in this very same place, out of the mere bravado of youth. Thanks to the darkness and to these trees, all movements on this point are lost to our enemies. You see that sharp projection; just underneath there is a series of rough steps cut by Nature's cunning hand in the rough stone. When this ends, you will find only a perpendicular surface as smooth as your hand; have no fear, but let go your hold, and you will fall into a bed of soft sand. Enter the river just in front of this rock; the water will not reach your knees, I am quite sure, or to your waist if the water be unusually high, which is not likely at this season. Each man must go in turn. The Sergeant will look out that the first man is out of sight. I, in the meantime, will talk with our foes in order to gain time. Come, boys, keep your heads; the Lieutenant will show you the road. Hold well on to the roots at the side, Francis."

Francis began to speak, but Hervé ordered him to obey without further discussion. And in another moment the youth disappeared over the edge of the precipice. Then one of the soldiers followed. This strange method of escape had awakened much gayety

among the soldiers. Bruidoux, kneeling on the edge, saluted each departure with a jesting adieu.

“Bon voyage! Don’t forget me, my boy! Don’t stop to rest on your way! Don’t get your hands dirty! Citoyen, write us, won’t you, Colibri?”

Although this plan was explained with marvellous rapidity, and its execution commenced as promptly, Hervé was afraid that suspicion would be aroused by too long a delay. After hastily bidding Bruidoux warn him when the last line of men was left on the cliff, he went back to the road.

“Monsieur!” he called, “I have this proposition to make to you: I will surrender at discretion, and my Lieutenant, with his men, must be allowed to return to his corps.”

“You cannot be in earnest, Commandant,” said Fleur-de-Lis. “When you are all in our hands, you surely cannot expect us to content ourselves with a portion, however important and precious it may be.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Hervé, who asked nothing better than to prolong the discussion. “I am infinitely obliged for the compliment, but is it not possible for you to be less exacting? It is not wise to reduce an enemy to despair, no matter how feeble he may be.”

“I repeat, sir,” answered Fleur-de-Lis, in a more menacing tone, “that I cannot believe you to be serious. Have you nothing else to say?”

“What conditions are you willing to make?”

“I am ready to promise you your lives, provided you agree to serve under the King’s flag.”

"You hear that?" murmured Bruidoux in the ear of his superior officer. "*Mon Commandant*," he added, "all but the last line are gone."

"Let them stand firm," answered Hervé, and then drawing back a little, he said:

"Monsieur Fleur-de-Lis, our honor will not allow us to accept such conditions."

"Fire!" cried Fleur-de-Lis.

The hill blazed with light, and a formidable explosion re-echoed through the valley. By this light the Chouans perceived the line of Republican soldiers, and could not suspect the disappearance of the others. Pelven had dreaded this, but had hoped that the darkness would render the aim of the enemy inaccurate. Three men fell.

"Fire! boys," said Hervé, "and then make your escape."

The soldiers obeyed, and the speed with which they retreated to the edge of the promontory may be readily imagined. Bruidoux was determined not to leave his Commandant, but he received an imperative order to follow his companions.

Hervé was now left alone in the midst of the thick smoke that made the darkness still greater. Again he turned to the Royalists.

"Gentlemen," he said, "my Lieutenant and myself surrender on condition—"

"Shout *Vive le roi!*" answered Fleur-de-Lis. "Shout with all your heart and soul, for you are a brave fellow, after all!"

Hervé cast one quick glance back; seeing, as he thought, two or three forms still on the rock, the intrepid youth again faced the enemy.

"I am willing," he began, "to save the rest of my men by —"

"Shout *Vive le roi!*" repeated Fleur-de-Lis. "No? Very well then. Fire!"

A new volley. Pelven heard the balls whistle around him, but they respected him. The flash, however, had shown the enemy that the promontory was vacant.

"Good Heavens! What does that mean? They have disappeared?" cried Fleur-de-Lis.

"Yes, sir; they have disappeared! *Vive la République!*" shouted Pelven, waving his sword in the air in his triumph; then dashing to the edge of the rocks, he disappeared down the perilous descent. Before he was at the base of the rocks, balls were flying over his head, and stones dropped around him, but he fell safe and sound on the sand by the river.

A few minutes later, a joyous shout from the opposite shore of the river, announced to the Chouans who had crowded upon the promontory, that Hervé was safe and sound among his men.

Before Pelven's foot fairly touched the shore, Francis leaped on his neck. The two young men warmly embraced each other. After a few moments of anxious suspense, the small body of Republican troops, feeling certain that the Whites had renounced their pursuit, moved with a rapid step across the country.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MENDICANT.

THE Civil wars of the West, had often disconcerted the most skilful military science; they were directed on the Republican side by improvised captains, who in their turn, improvised the most unprecedented tactics appropriate to the locality, and to the peculiar characteristics of their men. Invention took the place of experience, and audacity, of method.

The Republican army, after the forced march that had taken them to Ploërmel, relapsed into anxious inactivity. All reconnoissances in the vicinity were fruitless. Two or three battalions swept the country; they found it either deserted or perfectly tranquil. They could perceive nothing that confirmed the report in circulation, that Royalist troops were about to land under the protection of English guns. The number and subsequent movements of these forces, were the object of reports so vague and contradictory, that the General-in-Chief was plunged into strange perplexity.

After the bold blow struck by the Breton insurgents as if to celebrate the arrival of their new chief, they kept very quiet until, as we see, they rose in defence of Fleur-de-Lis. A Republican brigade, dashing off in pursuit of them at daybreak, had found some twenty

peasants scattered over the fields or within their huts, these worthy persons revealed to the soldiers in confidence, that they thought they had heard the sound of musketry at about one o'clock in the night, and had at once shut themselves up.

The officers used their authority to prevent their men from ill-treating these hypocrites, and continued their march some two leagues further to Kergant, which was found to be deserted; several horsemen galloped on to Pontivy, and came back to announce that there was not the smallest indication of the Whites.

Among the regular reports in circulation in the town, there was one which was received by the General at first with absolute incredulity. This report was to the effect that the vast Royalist army had taken refuge in the forest of La Nouée, which extended five leagues northwest of Ploërmel upon the Morhiban frontier. Similar retreats had more than once protected, in the course of the last campaign, the débris of Vendéan or Breton troops, but it was difficult to imagine that a victorious army, mistress of all the highways and of all the country, could have deliberately and wilfully enter the depths of a wood, thus retaining of all her conquests, only the most indifferent, if not the most dangerous position. Finally, after the return of these expeditions, which had been so unsuccessful, the General yielded to the force of public opinion, unreasonable as it might appear to him, and went in person to reconnoitre the suspicious locality. Contrary to his

expectations, all he saw indicated the presence of the enemy. Every road leading toward La Nouée bore traces of a hasty march—wheels had cut the road, horses had pawed it, and injured everything in the vicinity. The soil was strewn with fragments of clothing, with broken wheels, and débris of furniture and cooking utensils. The General drew rein upon a hill, and looked thoughtfully toward this black forest, which to his imagination, bristled with bayonets. He fancied that he heard a distant murmur like that of a gigantic bee-hive. He at once ordered two companies to advance on the forest; they were driven back by a quick discharge of musketry.

It was made apparent, therefore, that the enemy were there, and not disposed to conceal their presence. It was only their design that they veiled in mystery. They did not decline a skirmish when proffered, but evidently intended to do battle in the hour and the way, that seemed best to themselves.

The General-in-Chief returned to his quarters. The certainty that he had acquired, only augmented his anxieties; he could not conceive what end the Chouans had in view; the intelligence brought him by the scouts he sent out, were so vague and often contradictory that it was worse than nothing. Traitors were rare among the Bretons, and more so than ever, since the chances were all now in their favor. A few spies ventured into the mysterious forest, but they were never seen again.

The General had no choice but to submit to the

conditions thus imposed upon him by the enemy; five days elapsed in this indecision. The lines of the Republican army were extended over three leagues, from Ploërmel to the river we have more than once mentioned, and to the little town that seemed to guard it. One more topographical detail is essential, in order that our readers may fully understand the events which we are about to narrate. We beg them, therefore, to fix their attention on the fact that Ploërmel on the East, and Kergant on the West, form two sides of an almost triangular plain, the Northern point of which is the forest of La Nouée.

The woodman's axe had not, at the time of which we write, desecrated the forest and opened the wide space toward the South which now so greatly injures its extent and its dignity. It was in this part of the forest that, on the evening of the 22d of June, two persons most pitiable in appearance were slowly toiling along; one of these was a begger, whose age and infirmities were great; he was sustained and guided by a young girl, whose height would have seemed somewhat extraordinary for a woman, if fatigue and possibly privations had not bowed it somewhat. This poor creature had covered her ragged skirts with the remains of a cloak, the hood of which was pulled well forward, and half concealed features indicating both stupidity and cunning.

The old man and his rags were of the sordid and picturesque type of the classic beggar, a race now

passing away, like many others; a certain astute coquetry seemed to have arranged his parti-colored rags as if to charm a painter's eye. One of his legs had been amputated at the knee, and was supported by a rough piece of wood; and, as the crowning touch of woe, the man was blind.

The sun was setting behind dark clouds fringed with gold, when this wretched pair reached a path leading into the heart of the forest. The heat, in spite of the late hour, was stifling; not a leaf stirred in the trees, distant thunder was heard at intervals, and clouds of crows flew about, uttering hoarse caws of dismay.

"I have been a sailor in my day," said the old man, "and I tell you, my child, that we shall have a terrible storm to-night."

The child, as he called his companion, did not reply. Her eyes were fixed on the forest, apparently measuring its depths with some anxiety. The beggar pulled her by the cloak, and made her sit down at his side on the mossy turf beneath a tree. He talked to her in a low voice for some time, apparently giving her some severe admonitions and parental advice. After this brief conference, the man seemed to make an effort, and finally struggling to his feet, entered the forest, limping on his companion's arm. They had not advanced a hundred feet when three men appeared before them, dropping from the trees like ripe fruit, and at the same moment, ten or more, with guns, came out of the underbrush and surrounded the adventurous pair.

"Who are you? Where are you going?" said one who appeared to be the chief of the ambuscade.

"Ah! child," cried the blind man, "are these the Blues?"

"No father," answered the girl, with a disagreeable nasal twang: "these are good men, and true. They won't hurt us, and you can speak out. Is not that so gentlemen?"

"Let him speak," answered the Chouan, "we are ready enough to listen."

"Don't make a mistake, child," said the beggar "the servants of the good God and the King are not usually so short with poor people."

"The times are bad, my man," answered the Chouan, "and the Devil is cunning."

"Yes, my son, and it is foolish to be too confident. Let me feel of your coat, for it is a long time since my eyes could tell me anything."

The old man placed his hand on the Chouan's breast.

"The Heart and the Cross," he murmured, "that is good. Long live the King, my children! Where is Fleur-de-Lis, whom all the Saints guard? Where is he? I must speak to him."

"Fleur-de-Lis has no time to waste, my good man."

"But he won't waste his time with me, my handsome young soldier; that you may be very sure of! I have come a long distance with this girl of mine, who has just recovered from a fever, and we both need rest. I said when we started, that I did not mind fatigue in

the service of the King, and I don't. Ah! think only that the King will have his own again at last. When that day comes they may lay me in the earth, I shall be ready to go then."

"You talk too much, father," interrupted the companion of this fanatic, "you know we were told to waste no time."

"Yes, child, yes! You are right. Where is Fleur-de-Lis? I have something for him, something which I have brought out from under the very noses of the Blues."

The old man laughed and thrusting his hand among his rags, he brought out a package of letters carefully sealed; the envelope was marked in one corner with a peculiar sign in the form of a cross of Fleur-de-Lis. The chief of the squad of Chouans hesitated no longer; he bade the two adventurers follow him, and led them into the winding paths of the forest. They were soon arrested by an entrenchment of felled trees, behind which were encamped a hundred men or so. This post was passed with an exchange of words uttered in a low voice, but at a short distance there was another barricade; the forest seemed to be literally cut up by these fortifications, of which many were still further protected by deep ditches.

Most of the men wore no other uniform than the coat of the Breton peasant, with a scarf of some woollen material around them, into which pistols were thrust. Almost all wore heavy shoes filled with straw. Women and children were hovering over the fires.

The entire forest looked like a great village; cattle were tethered here and there; arms were stacked, and sheep grazed around them. A confused noise of voices and footsteps arose from under these forest arches—sometimes in a loud clamor, but more often in a monotonous murmur. But for the character of the vegetation, and the costumes, one might have thought the scene an oasis in the desert, occupied by a wandering and warlike tribe. After a march of a half hour or more, the guide informed the old man in a compassionate tone that they had nearly arrived at their destination. As he spoke, he turned into a much wider path, above which, interlaced branches formed a ceiling.

The silence that reigned in this privileged part of the forest increased the effect of its obscurity. The blind man felt his companion's hand tremble in his.

"What is it," he said softly, as the guide preceded them at some distance, "what impression has all this produced on you?"

"Sergeant," answered the girl in the same low tone, "I am aghast and bewildered."

"Come, now," returned the old man, "this will never do. Remember that this devilish forest may become to us a temple of glory."

"Yes, of glory, Sergeant."

"Yes, of glory now, and in the future. Don't you wish to see your name written in letters of gold? But what the deuce is that machine there? It is a cannon, if I live!"

The good man continued to mutter between his teeth. The guide was conversing with two sentinels posted at the extremity of this strange path; the thickening twilight permitted the strangers to distinguish in a large circular space, a symmetrical arrangement of tents and low huts; some of these huts were more solid than others, and looked as if more recently constructed. Several covered paths like that which our adventurers had just followed, converged from this point, protected by lines of ditches and barricades. This camp seemed to hold in this forest the place held by the *donjon* of the *moyen age*. All the elements of a combat *a l'outrance* and of a desperate defence were there assembled. This order and quiet, so religiously preserved, announced the presence of the most important chiefs, and the discipline of picked troops; in fact, the soldiers who lay stretched on the turf, or sat talking in the door-ways of the cabins wore, with few exceptions, a green coat and red vest; the uniform, in short, of the Royalist *chasseurs*; it was this redoubtable corps which had swallowed up all the heroes of the old wars, after the new treaties were made.

By this time fires were lighted within all the cabins, and threw their flickering light upon the groups scattered over the clearing. Fierce and resolute faces looked out from the darkness, and were immediately lost again. The guide stopped in the centre of the camp, in front of one of the oldest and largest huts, before which a numerous guard was placed. He

entered this hut alone, and in a few minutes emerged in search of the blind man and his companion, and led them into the presence of Fleur-de-Lis.

The young chief was seated behind a table talking with George; two men in ecclesiastical garments were writing on one corner of the same table, and a number of officers were standing in little groups, in the space between the table and the door. All conversation ceased when the mendicant entered, led by his daughter, who placed him directly in front of the chief, and then retired with awkward reverence. The man with his letters in his hand, and his whole figure expressing intense humility, seemed to wait to be questioned. Fleur-de-Lis turned the light of a lamp on the mysterious messenger, and studied him with his keen questioning eyes from head to foot.

"Whence come you?" he said, finally, "and who sent you."

"Is that you, Fleur-de-Lis?" asked the old man.

"It is I."

"What an awful thing it is to be blind," ejaculated the old man, with a mournful shake of the head. "It would be a cheering sight to an old soldier to see your face, Fleur-de-Lis."

"You have served in the army then, my good man?"

"I was at Fontenoy, my General. It was there that I was shot through the knee. The King, Louis XV., was there too; we made him a bed that night of the

English flags, and I remember how he said that a king of France ought not to like these flags except under his feet."

At this souvenir, evoked by the old man, all those present lifted their hats, and bowed profoundly toward Fleur-de-Lis, whose color rose in his cheeks.

"Upon my word, gentlemen," he said with a smile, "this is a most unexpected encouragement for me. The blood of the conquerors of Cressy and Agincourt runs still in the veins of the French, it seems; but whence come you, *mon brave*?"

"From Normandy, *mon General*. Monsieur de Froté brought me as far as Fougens in his carriage. I have made my way through the enemy's lines to bring you this package.

"Ah, you are a Normand, then?" said Fleur-de-Lis, "and from whence?"

"From the vicinity of Coutances, *mon General*."

"Ah!" resumed Fleur-de-Lis, looking from the blind beggar to his companion. Then addressing the man in the patois of Coutances, and receiving a reply in the same dialect, he said with a laugh:

"Yes, gentlemen, he is unquestionably a bona-fide Normand," and at once proceeded to break the seals of the package. After he had read all the letters which it contained, he picked up the wrapper from the floor, where he had thrown it, and examined the broken seal with great care; then fixing his flashing eyes on the blind man, an expression of great anxiety passed over

his face, but the tranquil and venerable air of the beggar, seemed to dissipate the vague distrust of the young chief. He seated himself at the table :

“My good man,” he said, “you will be obliged to set out again to-night. I am sorry to compel you to this fatigue, but I will arrange matters in such a way that you will not regret it. You will find at the turn of the *Pommier Fleuri*, a half league from Plélan, an agent of Monsieur de Frotés, who will take the rest of the journey upon himself. If you love the King you will allow yourself to be cut into inch bits, rather than lose the note which I shall entrust to you.”

As Fleur-de-Lis spoke, he began to write a few words in great haste. When he had sealed and directed this letter, he held it out over the table to the beggar. The man instantly extended his hand to take it.

“Ah ! you can see then, my friend, can you ?” cried Fleur-de-Lis, hastily drawing back the letter.

“Treason !” he shouted, “treason ! Arrest the spy and his daughter.”

At this sound a number of soldiers rushed into the hut, but the officers had already grasped the pretended mendicant and his companion, after a resistance which was shortened by the strong right arm of George.

The wooden leg of the beggar, his gray hair, and the red locks of his daughter, were detached in the struggle.

“Your name, comrade ?” said Fleur-de-Lis, when all was again calm.

“Bruidoux, Sergeant of Grenadiers, battalion of Sanspeur.”

“You know the laws of war, and you know the fate that awaits you. Have you anything to say?”

“No, nothing so far as I myself am concerned. But I dragged this young fellow into the expedition against his own will, and if you would let him live, I should find death much easier.”

“Impossible, comrade. But we may possibly come to some understanding: will you enter the service of the King?”

“Why not ask if I will enter the service of the Pope,” answered Bruidoux, with great gravity.

“And you, young man, what is your answer?” asked Fleur-de-Lis, approaching the other prisoner.

This question was followed by a long silence, during which Bruidoux’s brow contracted with intense anguish.

“Monsieur,” murmured the young captive in a faint voice, “the Sergeant is my superior, he speaks for us both.”

At these words the muscles in the old Sergeant’s face relaxed, and a tear glided down his bronzed cheek.

“It is a great pity,” answered Fleur-de-Lis, “for we can appreciate courage. Do not imagine that I am asking you to betray your country, we serve France as well as yourselves—better than you, we think. I shall give you an hour for reflection, for I am interested in you.”

“Benedécité,” added the young chief turning toward one of the chasseurs, “take these men into the empty hut at the end of the camp, guard them well and at the end of an hour, if they have not changed their minds, they are to be shot. It is unnecessary to come to me for further orders on the subject — indeed, I shall not then be in camp at that time.”

Benedécité, an old Chouan, of rough and sulky mien, placed the prisoners in the centre of a squad of chasseurs, and left the hut.

The intelligence of the bold attempt made by the two Republican spies, had been circulated through the camp, and they were met by crowds of soldiers, who gazed at them with eager curiosity, a curiosity which was far more respectful than insulting; for the very audacity of these men had pleased these adventurous spirits, whose only science was comprised in two words —bravery and cunning.

The captives were led to a hut a little apart from the others, situated at the very end of the camp and standing under a huge oak tree. This hut had no windows but was sufficiently ventilated through the disjointed hinges of a heavy door.

Benedécité and his men laid the two Republicans on the floor of the hut, their arms and legs were tied, and then coming back again placed a small lamp in the corner. •

“This is your clock,” said Benédicé, “when you see it going out, your hour has come.”

After these grim words the Chouan left the hut.

"Well, my boy," said Bruidoux, after meditating a moment, "this is an adventure which I must admit is not a very agreeable one. In the first place these beasts have tied these cords so tight, that they are cutting into my very bones. I did not care to ask them to be more gentle, but I am afraid, my poor Colibri, that they have not treated you in any better fashion."

"No, Sergeant," answered Colibri, "but I don't think it makes much difference now."

"I understand what you mean," replied Bruidoux in an odd sort of voice, "but you see—upon my word I am as hoarse as a crow, I must have taken cold. Ah! Colibri, I feel pretty badly; for me it does not matter, but my heart sinks when I think about you, and that it was I who led you into this scrape. But I swear to you, Colibri, I thought I was making your fortune. I had always liked you, and I believed your superiors and your companions would think all the better of you after an expedition of this kind. It was a good idea, Colibri, an excellent idea, but just now I don't like it as well. Colibri, you must tell me, my boy, if—if—that is, to say—you must tell me if you forgive me."

"I forgive you with all my heart, Sergeant," answered Colibri, "I am well aware that it was for my good, although the plan has not succeeded."

"You are a brave fellow," murmured Bruidoux, whose voice was hoarser than before. Then, after a brief silence, he repeated:

"Yes, you are a brave fellow, and you can always boast of having won my esteem, though I don't see what good that will ever do you."

"Then there is no hope?" asked the young man.

"Well, I don't know," answered the Sergeant, once more speaking in his old pompous voice, "the doctors say that while there is life there is hope. But as to saying, that I regard our present position as an advantageous one, I must frankly say I do not. The enemy have a great advantage over us—an advantage that seems to me decisive. I say so, for I don't like deception in an hour like this. I suppose we had best make those reflections which are suitable to the occasion."

A new silence succeeded this somewhat involved declaration from the old Sergeant. A sudden flash of lightning coming through the cracks of the door, paled the light of the lamp, and a great crash of thunder, at the same moment, showed that the storm which had been gathering all the evening, had at last burst over the forest.

"Once, at the farm," said Colibri, "the lightning set fire to a barn, and after that my father, in a thunder shower, used to walk up and down the room, while my mother said her prayers, in the corner by the fire, and this greatly comforted my father."

"Of course it did, my boy," Bruidoux replied, "and what were the prayers this good woman recited?"

"Well, Sergeant, I don't know how to tell you exactly, but they were prayers to the *bon Dieu*."

“Do you remember them, Colibri?”

“Yes, Sergeant, I think I do.”

“Well, then, my boy — Bless me, what a flash that was! For a moment I thought I was blinded, and who ever heard such thunder! Ah! well, Colibri, the Republic has made a mistake I fancy, in offending Almighty God, for there are hours and occasions when the rights of a man and a citizen, are a poor consolation! As to myself, Colibri, I have never done any harm to a woman nor to a child, nor even to a dog, but yet if you happen to have a bit of a prayer in your mind, it would be, perhaps, just as well for you to let it pass your lips.”

“Very well, Sergeant,” said Colibri.

“And you may as well speak pretty loud,” added the Sergeant.

There was a momentary silence, Colibri was collecting his thoughts.

“Sergeant,” he said presently, “this is what my dear mother used to say——” Colibri checked himself suddenly; the door opened with a creak of its rusty hinges, the prisoners realized that they were not alone, but it was impossible, in the position in which they lay, and confined as they were, to perceive who it was who had intruded upon them in this supreme hour.

“The lamp is there,” said Bruidoux, quietly, “would it not be as well if it were allowed to show some light on our guest.”

“Speak lower, Sergeant,” said a low masculine voice.

"I know those tones," murmured the Sergeant; "who are you, friend?"

"Kado!"

"Ah! the father of the small citizen with the top. Have you come to our assistance, my friend?"

"Speak lower, I tell you, the door is wide open, and the sentinel as he passes, is never more than ten feet away."

At the same moment, the sentry stopped near the door.

"The prisoners," said Kado, "were just asking me to assist them to change their position."

"All right," said the soldier, resuming his steady pace in front of the door.

Kado knelt down by the side of the captives; there was a gleam as of a knife, and in a second the cords that bound the prisoners were cut.

"If you value your lives," he said, "do not move a hair's breadth."

When Kado had accomplished this deed successfully, he stood up and began to talk to the prisoners in a low monotonous voice, changing his tone and the sense of his words, according as the sentinel came nearer or passed further on.

"You have only one half hour; the King is a good master! In ten minutes, when the storm is at its height—you will serve in good company—your limbs will be very numb. Yes, Fleur-de-Lis promises you each an officer's commission. I leave my knife here

under the straw. Take it, and tear away the thatched roof just where the trunk of the oak passes through it. The cause of the King is that of God, and will surely triumph! The branches of the oak extend over the thicket; these are unsafe. No, there is no shame in going back to the right course—but the lowest branch and the heaviest, supports the trellis covering the next path. Follow that branch as far as it goes, and then crawl on your hands and knees over the branches which are woven together. I am very sorry. It is a sad end for men like yourselves. When you reach the end of the trellis, drop to the ground. The lad whose life you saved will be waiting for you there. Farewell, then, since you refuse all our offers.”

“And what have they decided?” asked the sentinel, coming just within the door.

“To die,” answered Kado. “Let them alone—it is no use to urge them further. Good night, comrade.”

“It is such a deuced rain storm,” replied the soldier, “that I think I will stay under this shelter, until the hour is up.”

“Just as you please,” said Kado, carelessly. “Only if you were in their shoes, I think you would like to talk to your friend, without a stranger hearing every word you say.”

The soldier yielded to this objection with a sulky air and went out with the old Breton.

As soon as the door closed, Bruiloux uttered a stupendous sigh, echoed by Colibri.

"Well, my boy," said the old Sergeant, "we are in luck it seems. What have you to say?"

"Nothing, Sergeant."

"There is an old saying, Colibri, that every bush, no matter how small it is, has its shadow. Now, who would ever have supposed that this little scamp, with his top, would have protected me some day with his shadow? me, I say—Bruidoux! No one would have believed it, Colibri!"

"But, Sergeant," asked Colibri, anxiously, "have you understood one word of those involved directions given by our Chouan friend?"

"Yes, my boy, I have understood them from beginning to end; and I propose to consecrate the moments which our benumbed limbs force us to spend in this vile place, to explaining them more fully to you."

While Sergeant Bruidoux calmly repeated the details of their plan of escape to his meek subordinate—which commended itself to them both from its very audacity—the lightning became incessant, and the storm increased to absolute fury; the door of the hut shook in the wind, and the water poured over the sill like a small river.

Suddenly a clap of thunder, more violent than any that had preceded it, was heard, and the old oak tree, around which the hut was built, trembled to its roots.

"Now is the time, my boy," said Bruidoux, starting to his feet, and, snatching Kadé's knife, he reached up and tore the roof away from the tree. Then, sup-

ported by Colibri, to whom was given, for the moment, almost superhuman strength, he enlarged the opening with his hands. The wind rushed noisily in through this breach, and the lamp was extinguished.

"Courage, my child," said Bruidoux. "I will never desert you."

At the same time he lifted himself upon the outside of the roof. As soon as he was fairly established there, he embraced the oak with one arm, and assisted his companion with the other.

"We have the tree," whispered Bruidoux, "but I can't find the branch. Do you see it?"

Colibri did not reply, and the two men, bewildered by the tempest and blinded by the lightning, felt with nervous hands for the rough bark of the oak.

"Zounds!" muttered the Sergeant, "there is no more of a branch than there is in my eye, and the lamp will tell our tale only too soon!"

As he spoke, a lurid flash showed them the object of which they were in search. It was two or three feet below the roof, and stretched forth almost horizontally into space.

"Follow me," said Bruidoux; "I shall slide along this limb as if I were on horseback, and you do the same."

As the Sergeant spoke, he dropped on the limb, which, according to the directions of Kado, was to serve as their bridge. The branch bent under them, but as every twig was woven in with others up to the extremity of the limb, it did not break.

They were hardly well started than they heard the cry, "To arms! to arms!" behind them.

"Now, boy, show your metal," murmured Bruidoux.

"Some seconds later, the two fugitives reached the trellis, erected like a dais over the principal avenue of the camp. Suddenly a clamor of voices, and din of arms held them motionless. A crowd of men bearing torches passed under their very feet, running at full speed. As soon as the last torch had disappeared, our friends resumed their perilous journey. Suddenly a profound sigh escaped from Colibri's lips. The Sergeant turned.

"What is it, my child?" he asked.

"My foot has slipped through the branches, Sergeant, and I cannot pull my leg out."

"Is that all? Come, now, give it a good pull."

"Impossible, Sergeant. I cannot go on. Look out for yourself, and leave me, for I do not wish to be the cause——"

"Hush!. Do not insult your superior, if you please. Wait, and I will help you."

"All is lost, Sergeant," said Colibri, in a hoarse voice. "Some one is holding my leg!"

Bruidoux seized the young man's hand. A moment of mortal anguish ensued, and then a childish voice was heard whispering softly:

"Is that you, Monsieur le Sergeant?"

"Thank Heaven! It is the boy with the top!" cried Bruidoux, drawing a long breath of relief.

“Yes, it is I, my love!” he continued. “Wait a moment, and we will be with you!”

The old Sergeant, as he spoke, was busy disengaging poor Colibri’s leg. When he had succeeded he leaped lightly to the ground, and pressed Kado’s son to his heart.

The little boy led the fugitives through those paths which were thickest-wooded, and conducted them in safety to the edge of the forest. Bruidoux parted from him with affection, and with the promise that he would return his top on the first opportunity.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LETTER OF IMPORTANCE.

WHILE the two prisoners were carrying out their plans of escape, with a courage and audacity that merited their success, a young officer of the Royal and Catholic army, was moving rapidly along one of the paths, indifferent to the water pouring from the tops of the trees, and to the crash of the tempest. Occasionally, he shook the water from his cloak with a distrait air.

The sentinels, whom he passed at intervals, on his saying a word or two in a low voice, saluted him hastily, and when he reached a post of some importance, where he was recognized by the flickering light of the bivouac fire, he was surrounded by a respectful crowd, whose clamorous welcome mingled with the rattle of the thunder.

The wives and children of the proscribed men, aroused from their sleep, came out hastily from their miserable huts, repeating, with enthusiasm, the name of Fleur-de-Lis. From all quarters they ran to greet him; some tried to touch his clothing or his hands; his presence seemed to them superior to that of a mere mortal. Similar ovations greeted the Royalist General at various points in the forest.

We ought here to lift a portion of the veil of mystery which wrapped this young head, so adored by these people. This personage appeared in La Vendée toward the close of the great wars, but did not then bear the name by which he is designated by ourselves.

The course of events having thrown him in Le Bas Maine, and later in the north of Brittany, he there reunited the scattered elements of La Chouannerie.

The first thing he did was to remove the Chouans from their defensive position, and to lead them upon a battle-field. Astonishing good fortune followed him wherever he went. Not once did he fail. Long before he marched at their head, had the Breton insurgents become familiar with his name, and submitted to its singular influence.

Not only were his military qualities boasted of, but his marvellous activity, cool intrepidity, and the extraordinary combination of temerity and caution, were the theme of all tongues. An air of mystery hanging about him and his destiny, completed the enchantment of these simple and ardent natures. His personal beauty, his picturesque language, his liberality, which left him with but few possessions, other than his war horse; all the graceful and charming characteristics, in short, which are most dazzling to the young, were united in him, and made of him an almost supernatural figure.

His soldiers adored him for his courage; he charged the enemy with his drawn sword in his hand, and while

the bullets whistled past his head, sang the battle hymns, which he had himself composed. His men regarded him as invulnerable.

The other chiefs and the noblesse, less carried away by all these things, were, however, quite ready to pay their tribute of admiration to the genius shown by this celebrated partisan, for the especial method of warfare in which they were engaged; but they accorded it still more to the prestige of an illustrious resemblance, imprinted on the valiant brow of this stranger.

This resemblance was very real. Behind the clouds which enveloped the origin of this extraordinary existence, was concealed the shame of a woman, and the crime of a king. The nobles of the west had, in some degree, legitimatized, by their respect, the titles borne by this young man, for they felt it wiser to display a purple mantle of royalty, to these unsophisticated peasants and soldiers, and thus conceal the mortifying absence of those, who had a more direct right to such homage.

Meanwhile, the address of the young chief in utilizing all such circumstances as could strengthen his empire, his evident thirst for power, his more and more marked individuality, began to disquiet the very persons who had themselves done their best to awaken the worship of which he was the object.

The rumor of his success, the *éclat* of his popularity, reached the ears of the princely emigrés. So powerful a serviteur could not be other than displeasing to them.

The Comte de Puisaye wrote a letter of congratulation from England, which strongly marked his displeasure.

It was about this time that negotiations for peace were opened with the Republic. The fortunate adventurer refused to participate in them, but the intrigues carried on about him, left him isolated, deserted, and unable to prolong his resistance, and he was finally compelled to abandon Brittany.

A fishing boat received him on a deserted beach a short distance from Saint Breune—a small band of devoted Chouans witnessed his departure. Before leaving the shore he broke off the golden Fleur-de-Lis that surmounted the handle of his sword, and gave it to these faithful friends. This relic soon became the name of the banished and popular hero in their narrations. In more than one parish, the priests, in deference to an enthusiasm strengthened by these souvenirs, was in the habit of adding to the prayers for the King, an especial prayer for the Fleur-de-Lis.

Once delivered from his overshadowing presence, even his secret enemies regretted him. When again preparing for war, they found the old Chouanniere ready enough for action, but scattered and disorganized, as in the first days of their rising. No one among the chiefs was strong enough to bind together again the formidable sheaf of arrows they had so imprudently broken in the hand of Fleur-de-Lis.

The young chief was in England; all the emigrés were féting him. One of the exiled Princes, who was

also there, welcomed him warmly, thereby showing that he expected further services. Fleur-de-Lis even received at that time, it was said, a title which recalled the theatre of his first deeds of arms—one borrowed from the legitimate family of Louis XIV. An explanation accompanied this flattering allusion to the equivocal rights of the young Duc.

Some weeks later, the English Cabinet decided to throw into Brittany a certain division of the emigrés; one of the Princes, the uncle of the youthful King, a captive in the Temple, was to command this corps. It is well known that the presence of this person had been for a long time solicited by the Vendéan chiefs, and my readers are not ignorant of the discouragement and the bitterness, awakened and often expressed by the famous supporters of the Royalist cause, at the eternal postponement of their rightful hopes.

The expedition was ready; it was necessary, however, to sweep from Brittany the scattered Republican forces, and thus assure safety in the landing of troops from the fleet. Fleur-de-Lis seemed the best person for that task, and accepted it. His name had acquired in his absence additional fame, and in two days, such was its charm, every hut was empty, and he had an army.

The official investiture, which, vague as it was, he had received, lent him, in the eyes of the other chiefs, a certain superiority; and no one disputed anything he chose to do. In a brief campaign he accomplished, as

we have seen, the mission with which he was entrusted, but the English fleet did not appear at the appointed day. New instructions were sent to Fleur-de-Lis, which he obeyed, and modified his original plans. It was then that he abandoned the sea coast. This delay, however, which was not without a certain suggestion of treason, had profoundly wounded the impetuous spirit of the young General; he saw himself sacrificed as the recompense of his devotion. His hatred of the English, always strong, now became more violent. He avowed his opposition loudly, to any measures advanced or protected by their policy.

More than one indiscreet expression passed his lips and aroused the old distrust in those about him. A number of the chiefs were sincerely attached to him, but others in their secret hearts yielded to his yoke with great reluctance. They were uneasy at the idolatry shown him by a whole province, and commented with considerable sharpness on words he dropped, indicative of that fatalism, common to favorites of fortune who are habituated to success; for as these men justly thought, this fatalism often conceals the most ambitious schemes.

Our readers will soon see how well founded were all these jealous apprehensions.

Fleur-de-Lis, on reaching the encampment, found a large body of cavalry there — the only cavalry, in fact, in the Royalist army. It was, however, most insufficiently equipped; half of the horsemen, like most of

the volunteers in the forest, wore only wooden shoes, above which they strapped pieces of leather in lieu of boots. The young chief took a horse, and rode at full gallop toward the Château de Kergant.

The Forest de la Nouée had served as an asylum to the Marquis and his family, during the day following the surprise of the château by the detachment commanded by Francis. The Marquis, wishing to avoid as long as possible for his family, all the fatigues and privations of a life of proscription, determined to return with them to the hereditary Manor. Fleur-de-Lis promised to protect them through the medium of his spies, from the possibility of any further surprise.

At the château, all the habits of the daily life of the family had been resumed, for thus they hoped to delude themselves into the feeling of their former days of security, but this surface calm deluded no one; cruel pre-occupation was revealed in the words and even in the very silence of each individual.

Bellah had fallen into a condition of alarming lassitude; Andréé herself rarely smiled. On the evening to which the progress of our tale has now brought us, all the members of the household had separated as usual toward ten o'clock. Bellah had been in her chamber some ten minutes, and was standing with one hand on the back of an easy chair, with her head thrown a little forward, and her eyes fixed on vacancy; she seemed to be listening with melancholy interest to the noise of the storm without, and to the sad echoes

that filled the corridors of the old château. The beautiful face of the young girl was sadly altered, but her pallor and the shadow under her eyes, added the one charm of her sex in which she had been lacking -- that of weakness. With a start she shook off her melancholy, and going to a small table, which served as a stand for book-shelves of carved ebony, she took out a book bound in velvet, on the cover of which was a cross; but without opening it, she pushed it gently aside again; then shaking her head, with an expression of anguish, she seated herself and began to write.

“Hervé, my brother, I shall never see you again. Your contempt, unjust as it is, is killing me! You would hardly know me, my friend. Those about me think it is fatigue and anxiety. I let them think as they choose, but I am dying. I think my heart is affected; sometimes it beats so quickly that I cannot breathe, and then it stops entirely, and I think all is over. This terrible storm has upset me; it seems to me that each gust of wind is tearing me up by the roots like some frail tree. If I am mistaken, and it be God’s will that I shall continue to live, these lines will never reach you.

“Hervé, my whole life has been given to duty, to fulfill which, I have voluntarily sacrificed myself, but I ask that my grave, at least, shall belong to me, and that it be pure in the eyes of all — above all, in yours! When I am no more, it can do no harm to any one, if

you should shed a tear or two, and this thought is **very** dear to me.

“It must be that I am doing quite right in writing thus to you, for my conscience does not trouble me, and you know, Hervé, how sensitive my conscience was — it is sensitive still, whatever you may believe.

“When my own lips bore witness to my shame, of course you were right in believing me, and yet you were too credulous, too prompt in your belief!

“It seems almost incredible that you, almost within this dwelling, which was our mutual home, where my nature slowly unfolded before your eyes, that one word I say, could efface all these dear memories, memories which should have cried out in my favor. Ah! it seems to me that on the great day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be known, that were I to hear from your own lips an avowal of infamy and baseness, that I should wait—I should wait for the voice of God Himself before I could believe them. And you never doubted, never hesitated! A single word had more weight with you, than the testimony of all my life, for I lied, Hervé! yes, I lied! and I have no excuse to make for the lie, Hervé, none whatever, for those faults commanded by Duty are, or should be, elevated to the rank of virtues.

“I must explain all to you, since you no longer understand me. I have always been faithful, passionately faithful, to the sentiments and the ideas with which our childhood was fed. I believe in the King as

I believe in God. This double faith is all on which I rest, for I see in the Future only darkness and troubles through which it seems impossible for me to live. Indifference is a word whose sense I never grasped. I thank Heaven for having preserved my faith unshaken, for to my mind there are not torments comparable to those which I should have endured, had my faith wavered. A lively faith, Hervé, in times like these, enables a weak woman to fulfill her duties. How many times I have envied our beloved Andréé! The goodness of God has measured her weakness in appointing her duties. She loves you — she is happy, and she is sleeping! Alas! Why was I not made also for the serene happiness of home, for the simple duties of domestic life?

“God has not wished it, and I bow to His decrees. It depended on me to prevent the trouble I saw rising between you and this young man. It was my duty to prevent it at whatever cost. There is no life more precious than that of this young man, to all who love the King. The King! This name, Hervé, is one no longer dear to you, and you can with difficulty comprehend how it entailed this sacrifice on me. You disdain our prejudices, and call our enthusiasm idolatry. Hervé! the noblest souvenirs of our country and of our families — fidelity to the altars and the tombs of our fathers — all that is illustrious and sweetest in the Past — all that speaks of virtue and sacrifice to a Christian spirit — of glory to a Frenchman — all is

enclosed, as you well know, in that mysterious and sacred circle, the Crown of Royalty.

“You say that a new order of things has begun, when all these matters are as shadows. If this be so, then I am not fitted for it. I ought to die, as did the Pagan Virgin, on the threshold of the Temple, where I offered up my last prayer. I was so far from being guilty, Hervé, that I did not at first understand, of whom you were speaking. It is strange, I again repeat, that you should have yielded such facile belief! I wished to save the life of this young man, but in justifying myself, I must not allow you to think evil of another. Alix, whom you know, had made me her confidante. I did not seek this mark of esteem, but it at once explained your mistake. She came to me to entreat me to speak to her father, in favor of one of our young officers, whom she wished to marry. She admitted that she met him in the grove that fatal night, and that she feared to be seen there by her father. The man she loves, is known by a name that may have contributed to mislead you. He is called Fleur-de-Genet.

“This is all, I believe, that I wished to say to you, and my heart is easier.

“My friend, if your eyes ever rest on these words, it will be when I no longer breathe. This knowledge takes from me much of my timidity. If I insist, Hervé, that you shall hold me in tender remembrance, it is because I am worthy of it. I have struggled long

in your behalf. God has made us masters of our acts and our words, but not of our hearts. Can it be that you really supposed me guilty? I had resolved to be as a stranger to you ever more, for neither passion or pain, as I prove this day, could ever have obtained from me a resolution contrary to the law of my conscience. Since our interview among the Stones of the Druids, you have had every reason to believe that I was nothing more, could be nothing more, than a mere souvenir to you; but to profane the sealed tomb of my heart, to give myself to another, to lay my widowed hand in that of any other man ——”

As Bellah wrote these last words, she lifted her swimming eyes to Heaven, and at the same moment, the door opened and Fleur-de-Lis entered. Mademoiselle rose with a start. The young man stood still near the door, in a most respectful attitude, with lowered head.

“Monsieur le Duc,” she said, with somewhat haughty gravity, “my father is, I think, still in the *salon*.”

“Excuse me, Mademoiselle,” answered Fleur-de-Lis, “but I wish to speak to you alone. You may well think that no ordinary matter could have induced me to take a step which should offend you. I need your advice, and must consult you without delay.”

Mademoiselle fixed her eyes on the face of her companion, but could detect no other expression than that of great perplexity. She sank into her chair again, overcome with agitation.

"What is it, sir?" she asked.

Fleur-de-Lis hesitated a moment before replying; then going nearer to the young girl who listened eagerly, he said:

"You, at least, will do me justice, I feel sure of this. You know whether I gave myself up, heart and soul, to my often perilous duties."

"I know," interrupted Bellah, "that you have always been worthy of the blood in your veins."

"But a man's patience and his self-abnegation have their limits," resumed the young man. "Woe be unto those who change the devotion of faithful hearts into less noble qualities!"

"These are very strange words! What are you thinking of?"

"If I have not learned to be treacherous, Bellah, it is not for lack of teaching. You already know much, if not all of what has taken place, but nothing ought to remain obscure to you; I had been charged to destroy all, and everything, which could in any way prove an obstacle to the landing of those whose coming had so long been watched for. A very few days after my arrival my task was fulfilled; the sea coast was free, as indeed, was the whole country, and we waited for our friends and allies; they came not, but left us face to face with one of the most redoubtable armies—with the best General—of the Republic."

"But you were duly informed, you received constant orders?"

“None whatever, until three days had elapsed. I can not attempt to describe to you the intensity of my anguish, during those long days of uncertainty and abandonment. My anxieties, it is true, were not for myself, but for those brave fellows who had trusted to my word, and whom I had led to a useless butchery. The order finally arrived; the fleet had been delayed for reasons which were not explained to me. They asked for a week’s delay, during which time I was to preserve all our advantages, occupy the enemy or vanquish them. You know the resources of this enemy, and the stuff of which they were made. Such orders are easy to give, but they are not so easy to obey. Whatever was the result, however, they were delivered of an enemy, or of a serviteur more odious still. Bel-lah, I obeyed.”

“God and your honor required you to do so,” answered the girl, with dignity.

“That is precisely the point on which I do not feel certain,” said Fleur-de-Lis. “To sacrifice so many generous fellows—I speak of my soldiers—for a selfish cause, is just what I do not believe that either religion or honor command. Nevertheless, I obeyed. I threw myself into this forest, and prepared for a desperate combat; it was clear to me that it would be our tomb if the enemy decided to attack us, I also felt convinced that few of them would go out alive.

“The attack, however, did not take place, and this is the present state of things. The English fleet will

reach Queberon to-morrow. If the Republicans are warned, they will hurry to the coast. I can follow them and a battle will take place. But if they continue in ignorance of these movements, as I hope, I may go ahead of them, and during the coming night reach the sea coast before they do.

"The situation is a critical one, indeed," said Bellah, much moved; "why not consult my father?"

A shadow of embarrassment flitted over the handsome face of Fleur-de-Lis.

"The point upon which I am undecided," he answered in a strange tone, "is whether it were not wiser for me, instead of adopting either of the courses I have laid before you, to leave the forest, and retreat toward the North, with all my Chouans.

Mademoiselle de Kergant, at once and fully, realized, that such a step would crush, at a single blow, all the dearest hopes of the Royalists, for it deprived the expedition of the emigrés of all support, and abandoned them to the mercy of the Republican army. She shivered with horror.

"Forgive me, Monsieur le Duc," she murmured, "I am ready to give you all my attention, but my head aches, and I am certain that I have not understood you."

"And I am quite sure you have."

Bellah rose slowly from her seat and looked at the young man with profound astonishment imprinted on every feature.

"It is not possible, she murmured, "treachery from

you! And you would abandon your companions in arms, abandon the Prince, a son of France, the brother of the King?"

"The Prince," said Fleur-de-Lis, his lips parting with a smile of bitter disdain, "the Prince is not coming!"

"It is false!" cried Mademoiselle de Kergant, "who dares say that? Who dares say that a Bourbon will forfeit his word, and desert his flag?"

"He, himself, says so," answered Fleur-de-Lis, throwing an open letter on the table. Bellah glanced at it and a burning blush covered her face.

If history has not flattered the chivalric personage whose conduct at this time wounded so many loyal hearts, it is natural to suppose that no reproach would have seemed to him so keen, as this blush on a young girl's brow.

"England must have detained him," she murmured.

"Detained him! If England refused her vessels, was there no fishing boat which would have saved the honor of Cæsar? At all events he is not coming. As to the others, I can warn them in ample season, they will not land, I shall betray no one but England, and of that feat I shall be proud."

"But," exclaimed Bellah, with enthusiastic energy, "what does the Man matter? Is the Crown less pure, the cause less sacred? And you abandon it! But what are you going to do? What are your projects? For whom will you fight? In whose name? What will keep your soldiers together? Not one of our brave Bretons will follow you."

"All will follow me!" answered the young man. "Do you think the sole feeling with which they take up arms, is their regard for the King—for the King who is the ally of the English—of the Saxons as they call them—their old enemies of this King who is always absent—who is so prodigal of their blood, so careful of his own? No, Bellah, they will be quite willing for me to free them from an execrated alliance, and will follow me in the name of their religion, their liberty, and their menaced country. This is the cause they serve, the cause to which it is glorious to devote one's self. Words are nothing! You follow me, Bellah, and you understand me?"

"All that I understand," said Mademoiselle de Kergant, as she fixed her cold severe eyes on those of the young man, "all that I understand is, that you propose to serve the Revolution in your own fashion, and to your own profit. You are powerful, Fleur-de-Lis, your success and your influence are such that I have always felt that God sent you. But take care that He does not withdraw His hand, on the day that you withdraw from Him, your faith."

"God," cried the young man, "may have preserved for me another destiny than that of forever serving ingrates."

"But if your fatal power, Fleur-de-Lis, drags down with you such simple natures as those of your soldiers, do you think that you can also carry our faithful noblesse with you?"

"Some of them I know influenced by their narrow

prejudices, will abandon me, while others, I am certain, will march as steadily in the name of France, as in the name of that King, who teaches them the lesson of forgetfulness. I am not the only one, Bellah, who contemplates this movement. I will give you the proof if you desire, then you may be quite sure that I have not hazarded such a design without, at least, some appearance of success."

"What design and what success? In the name of Heaven, answer me, for I am bewildered by your words."

"Bellah! I am called to other scenes of honor, and of danger; the weight of my name, the support of my soldiers, are invoked to resuscitate the Vendéan wars. Other provinces are ready. Federalism is awake throughout France, and offers us her hand. The King and all the enemies of the Republic are with us. The time when a single victory was sufficient to open the roads to Paris—to stifle this Republic stronger then, than to-day, may yet return. The country is not like Kings, jealous of those who serve it; its gratitude waits on its liberators. These are noble opportunities, and a nature is not necessarily treacherous, because it is carried away by them."

Mademoiselle de Kergant listened with breathless terror to this language uttered by a man whose nature was embittered by injustice, and exalted by ambition.

"I understand, now," she said, slowly; "pride is leading you astray. Fleur-de-Lis, you are lost, I fear, but it is frightful to think that you lose us at the same

time. You will kill our cause forever, and I see all this," she added, wringing her hands, "I see all this and I can do nothing."

"You can do everything, Bellah," said Fleur-de-Lis, in a low, quick voice, laying his hand on the young girl's arm.

She looked at him without a word.

"Yes," he continued, "there is no cause to which I would not consecrate myself with joy; no bitterness, and no affront which I would not accept, were I your husband."

"My husband!" cried Bellah, starting back as if an invisible gulf yawned before her.

"Ever since I knew you, Bellah, glory and fortune have been precious to me, only because they brought me nearer to you. Your love was dearer to me than aught else in the world. You refused it, and to forget you I must become either a great man, or a great criminal. The passions which are eating my heart out are terrible; you cannot comprehend them, but you can exorcise them."

Mademoiselle de Kergant's hands were clasped upon her breast as if ready to lie down upon her tomb; her pale lips parted: "the King," she murmured, softly.

Suddenly an expression of triumphant suffering spread over her face. She went towards Fleur-de-Lis, and extending her hand, she said, with a smile of superhuman sweetness:

"If this weak hand be of such weight in the scale of such lofty destinies, I shall lay it there with pride."

The young chief seemed confounded and almost embarrassed by a reply so prompt, and by such a facile victory.

"Is it possible!" he murmured; "I was mistaken then. You do not love—that is you are able to love me. But, perhaps it is Duty alone which influences you—you are sacrificing yourself!"

"Have I that air, then?" asked Bellah, with the same serene tranquillity. "No, do not imagine it, my nature is not perhaps capable of the warmth of sentiments for which you might look in another, but you must be satisfied when I tell you that I will be yours. Time will do the rest."

"Bellah! can I believe you? This unhopèd for happiness—oh! what a burthen you lift from my heart—from what mortal anguish you deliver me! How can I ever reward you?"

"By serving the King, Fleur-de-Lis!"

"I will serve him! I will die for him if needs be! and I will die full of gratitude, if I die as your husband! Bellah—it is cruel to importune you more now—forgive me, for I love you with my whole soul. Your promise is sincere, is it not? You do not intend to forfeit your word; the mere utterance of this suspicion is an insult to you! But do you not rely on the chances of a murderous war?"

"I am ready to yield instantaneous obedience to my father's wishes, and to your own."

"So be it! If your father grants his consent, then the priest who, to-morrow night, will bless our arms

before our departure, will bless our union. May I venture to hope this, Bellah?"

"The hour is very near," said Bellah, faintly; "but see my father; I will offer no objection to anything you may choose to ask of him. Go, Fleur-de-Lis, I am not well to-night, and all these conflicting emotions are more than I can bear."

The young man knelt before her, and taking the girl's hand, pressed it respectfully to his lips; then after a profound reverence at the door, he went out of the room.

As Fleur-de-Lis reached the end of the long corridor that ran through this portion of the château, he suddenly turned, thinking he heard a step behind him. He listened attentively, but all was quiet, and he concluded that he had been deceived by the echo of his own foot-fall. He began to descend the stair-case, but his first impression had been correct: he was followed.

A woman—an avenging shade—appeared from the darkness and glided after Fleur-de-Lis, down the stair-case which led to the grand hall of the château. While he entered the sal^{on} to find the Marquis, she gained the court-yard, and disappeared in the obscurity of the avenue. Only a few brief moments had elapsed, when a long, piercing scream, coming, apparently, from Bellah's chamber, suddenly awakened Andréé, whose room was separated from that of her adopted sister merely by the thickness of a wall; she started up and rushed in, only to find Bellah, cold and unconscious, lying on the floor. The room was soon crowded with

all the people in the château, while Monsieur de Kergant, aided by the Canoness, endeavored to recall his daughter to life, Andréé caught sight of the letter on the table, which Fleur-de-Lis had interrupted. She read several lines, anxious to discover, if possible, the meaning of the sudden illness which had struck her dear sister down; then she quickly folded the letter and concealed it in her bosom.

That same night, a young woman, mounted on a horse all bathed in sweat, presented herself at the advance posts of the Republican army, and asked to be conducted into the presence of the General-in-Chief. The staff officers had all, the previous evening, removed their quarters to the small town on the bank of the river, three leagues from Kergant.

The General, at the first words uttered by the young woman, sent for Commandant Pelven. After a conference of a half hour, the mysterious Amazon returned by the same road she had come.

The first gleam of dawn was apparent on the horizon, and Pelven was still shut up with the General-in-Chief, when a peasant, who was half an idiot, but who had already served more than once as an intermediary between the young Commandant and his sister, made his appearance, and asked to see Hervé, to whom the peasant gave an envelope sealed with extreme care.

This envelope contained two lines from Andréé, and Bellah's unfinished letter.

CHAPTER XIV.

A L I X .

MONSIEUR DE KERGANT was one of those men, worthy of all respect, whose lives are governed by natural and healthy sentiments. Their consciences have no dark shadows; good sense and morality afford a steady light which no worldly wisdom can extinguish. Such natures are stigmatized as narrow, but their private lives are always irreproachable. Their political lives, especially at these critical epochs, when the human mind must arrive at sudden decisions, and make abrupt changes, may be subject to error, but never to shame. Even those who disdain such characters seek their association, because they inspire confidence, and in their presence, one can lift one's social mask, and breathe freely. These natures are as transparent as they are solid, but can be readily deceived. Fleur-de-Lis, in enveloping his delicate confidence with intricate phrases, had no difficulty in winning the pardon of the loyal old Marquis for his audacity.

Monsieur de Kergant adored his daughter, but understood no more than would a child, anything of the complicated enigmas of passion. He had never suspected that the silent indifference with which Bellah

regarded the conduct of her adopted brother could conceal a tender recollection. Other appearances, moreover, had aided his mistake. His paternal solicitude had first been excited, by finding in the letters written by his daughter from England, enthusiastic expressions of admiration for the brilliant Chief of the Bretonne Chouannerie. He had since read the same sentiment in Bellah's eyes in the presence of this young man, who also perceived these ingenuous demonstrations, but was by no means gratified, since his clear vision discerned the true nature of the influence he exercised over the pious Royalist. He knew that the preference of a woman is always veiled in mystery, and that a virgin struck to the heart, draws her veil over her wound; but these refinements were little understood by Monsieur de Kergant, who entertained not the smallest doubt, that his daughter's heart had been carried away by the beauty, the courage, and the charm of Fleur-de-Lis.

In his deep affection for his only child, the Marquis did his best to believe that the alliance in which he supposed his daughter's happiness to be involved, was all that was desirable. In this attempt he met with more or less success, and he himself gladly submitted to the ascendancy of the young chief; continually defending him most energetically against the reproaches and suspicions of his rivals, and in this way had begun to regard him already as his son.

The stain of his birth, had, in the eyes of the

Marquis, been obliterated by the brilliancy of the services he had rendered, aided by the evidences of distinguished consideration.

If it were a sacrifice to the old gentleman to obliterate the name of an ancient family by the overshadowing but transitory fame of Fleur-de-Lis, he found pleasure in it, and a new source of devotion. He saw a new security given to a sacred cause; a new bond which should stifle all forebodings, and bring the noblesse once more around the popular hero.

Such were the secret impressions of Monsieur de Kergant, consequently the declaration made to him by Fleur-de-Lis, of Bellah's consent, was welcomed with the utmost kindness—almost, indeed, with joy. It relieved him of the doubts weighing so heavily upon him; it gave him a plausible explanation of the sadness which had overwhelmed his beloved daughter for so long, and at the same time indicated a remedy. The nervous attack so suddenly prostrating Bellah, only confirmed the Marquis in his mistake, and removed any lingering objection. Sitting by the bedside of his daughter, he accepted her silent despair as an indication of excessive and girlish timidity, and looked upon her tears as those of happiness, when in reality they were bitter enough, and caused to flow, by his unwittingly cruel consolations.

Monsieur de Kergant busied himself that very night in removing those obstacles, which religion might oppose to a marriage so prompt. A dispensation would

be easily obtained. Many proscribed priests had taken refuge among the victorious bands of Fleur-de-Lis: one of them occupied a distinguished and elevated position in the church. It was he who, on the departure of the Royalist army, was to celebrate in the chapel at Kergant, a solemn mass for the success of the expedition. He consented to bless, at the same hour, the marriage of the young General, and of Mademoiselle de Kergant.

Bellah was told this early in the morning, when she awoke from the profound sleep of nervous exhaustion following her attack of the night. She rose, knelt in prayer, and then went out into the park, where she took a long and solitary walk.

She was surprised at her own physical strength, but her brain was still confused and her heart full of tumultuous and contradictory thoughts. Suddenly she remembered the letter she had begun, and hurried back to her room.

Our readers know how this letter had disappeared. Bellah called Andréé, and asked if she had seen it, but Andréé declared that she had not, and asked, with some little sharpness of tone, what letter she meant.

Bellah dared say no more.

Mademoiselle de Pelven, with the rest of the inhabitants of the château, had been informed of the approaching marriage. After what she had read—written by the hand of her friend—Andréé was certain that Bellah was acting in obedience to her austere convic-

tion of duty. She felt the deepest compassion and respect for her adopted sister, but to allow her to perceive these sentiments was to acknowledge her own perfidy. It was, therefore, for this reason, that Andréé, all that day, adopted the rôle of an offended friend.

It is not true, that to souls deeply tried an end comes to their griefs, and that they become hardened and indifferent. No! as long as life is left, so is the capacity for suffering.

Mademoiselle de Kergant realized this, when she found that some one, a servant possibly, had stolen her letter, and was in possession of her most secret thoughts—her only love letter—her will and testament. If some more responsible person were in possession of this letter, Bellah foresaw only new complications. She feared that she would not be allowed to accomplish her sacrifice, and that the despair of her fiancé, would drive him to some desperate step. She passed the early part of the day, a prey to these anxieties; then, as nothing occurred to confirm them, she ended by persuading herself that her letter had simply been lost in the confusion incident to her sudden illness, or that the Canoness had it in her possession, and judged it expedient to keep the secret.

Fleur-de-Lis appeared for a moment at the château in the morning, then returned to the forest camp, where the preparations for the movement of the army detained him until night. Monsieur de Kergant was to accompany the expedition. He went to his daughters

and his sister at the château, under the care and watchful supervision of Kado, who, under any other circumstances, would have been heart-broken at being separated from his master in such perilous times; but all Kado's scruples yielded before the anxiety he felt, in regard to his daughter's health.

Alix, in fact, had strangely altered; all the youthful gayety and energy which were the marked characteristics of her beauty had vanished. Like Bellah, she looked faded and worn. On the morning of which we write, she was too ill to rise from her bed, and Bellah went to see her in her room.

Notwithstanding the marked difference of position between these two young girls, the associations of their childhood, the privations and anxieties of the disastrous days in which they lived—exile and dangers shared in common, had drawn them very closely together. In Bellah's enthusiastic nature, this affection was augmented by the admiration with which the poetic beauty of Alix inspired her. She insisted that Alix was a reproduction of the fabulous queens of the *Americaine* legends; and, consequently, bent all her energies in the most delicate manner, to soothe the tenacious pride of the young Bretonne, and to remove from her life any suggestion of servitude.

Alix, on her side, feeling probably, all the more deeply, because of her reticence of expression, had allowed her gratitude and affection toward the noble companion of her infancy, to increase until it amounted almost to fanaticism.

On seeing Mademoiselle de Kergant enter, Alix had lifted herself with evident pain from her bed where she was lying; a faint smile passed over her face, the pallor of which was almost ghastly. "Good Heavens!" cried Bellah, as she took the girl's burning hand, "are you so very ill, then?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle; very ill," said Alix.

"And I, perhaps, am the cause! I have not yet spoken to your father for your fiancé. Forgive me, I have been so much harrassed. But, after all, you begged me to wait a few days. I will speak to him, however, at once, and will try to obtain permission for Fleur-de-Genet to remain here, if that is what troubles you, and makes you ill."

"No, no!" answered the girl, hastily; "my father would never forgive him were he to fail to go. Besides, it is not that—I am ill. And you are to be married, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes; to-night."

"And you love him?" asked Alix, after a pause.

"Yes, I love him."

The sick girl's eyes, brighter with fever, darkened with a sombre light, softening as she met Bellah's tender gaze.

Stretching out her arms, she drew Mademoiselle de Kergant toward her, and embraced her violently; then pushing her away again, she burst into a violent passion of tears.

Bellah made no resistance—her sympathy was —

intense that tears stood in her own eyes. Seated on the edge of the bed, the two girls wept together. Alix, with trembling hand, dried the tears on the cheeks of her loved rival, with her own lustrous curls.

Kado came in and interrupted this silent interchange of hopes and fears, and Bellah pressed her friend's lips and left the room, saying as she went, a kind word or two to her old servitor.

Monsieur de Kergant, summoned by his military duties, had passed the afternoon in the forest, in conference with the other chiefs. As the first evening shadows crept over the fields, he returned to the château.

All favored the plans of Fleur-de-Lis. The spies, who kept up between the forest, and the Republican line, a species of incessant telegraphic communication, had seen the bivouac fires of the enemy, and had heard the signal given for retreat. The army of the Blues preserved its defensive attitude, and slumbered without suspicion, leaving on the field force for the plans formed for the night; the Royalist forces, leaving the forest on the western side, in order to reach the coast, and receive the emigrés, who were to land the next day from the English fleet.

The success of this movement would determine the cause of the King throughout the West of France. Such at least was the hope of Monsieur de Kergant.

Leaning on the balcony of an open window, the old gentleman spoke with enthusiasm of the happy Future,

to which he looked forward; all the family, with the addition of several friends, were assembled in the sal^{on}, and listened in attentive silence. Bellah, at her father's side, looked out on the starry darkness. Suddenly she started, and laying her hand on the arm of the Marquis, she said: "Hark!"

Every one in the sal^{on} hurried toward her, and listened attentively. Amid the calmness of the night an ever-growing murmur reached their ears—a murmur like the distant sound of the sea, rolling up the beach.

It was the Chouan army approaching. A few moments later, Fleur-de-Lis, followed by a group of his officers, galloped into the court-yard.

When close upon Kergant, the Royalists divided into two columns, which continued to march in parallel lines, a short distance apart. Thus one division followed a road that ran back of the park, and the meadows, and the other, passed directly in front of the ch^{ateau}.

All the authority of Fleur-de-Lis was needed to discipline this tumultuous horde. The women, children and old people—all, in short, who could not fight—had been scattered through the neighboring villages. A dark and compact mass filed for three hours past the ch^{ateau}, without disorder and without other noise than that inseparable from the tumult of a great multitude.

At intervals the glasses trembled in their leaden set-

tings, when the heavy wheels of the caissons rolled past; and occasionally the men, recognizing Fleur-de-Lis in the luminous frame of one of the windows of the château, waved their hats in the air. The silent greetings had a most singular effect. The young General, with his little corps of officers especially attached to his person, was to rejoin these columns immediately after the celebration of his marriage.

It was now eleven o'clock. Mademoiselle de Kergant, who immediately on the arrival of the young chief had disappeared from the *salôn*, now re-entered on her father's arm. She was dressed with severe simplicity in white, but her toilette was characterized with all that care which a beautiful woman rarely forgets. They all passed into the next *salôn*, where supper was served. The white dresses of the women, the numerous lights, the festive air, which the Canoness had done her best to give to this wedding supper, were, one and all a melancholy failure; nothing could efface the impression of approaching danger, and impending separation.

André, pale and silent, trembled at times from head to foot. Bellah preserved her habitual dignity, but her extreme pallor and unsteady eyes, as well as the light frown contracting her regular brows, betrayed the struggle going on within. Fleur-de-Lis alone appeared to be unmoved by any sinister apprehensions, and abandoned himself entirely to his triumphant love. His radiant brow his animated words, by degrees

dissipated the constraint, reawakened hope, and imparted courage to the anxious souls about him.

Suddenly, however, a cloud passed over the face of the young chief, and a phrase he had begun, remained unfinished. The door had opened; Alix had come in. She slowly and noiselessly glided to the table. Monsieur de Kergant hurried toward her, reproaching her affectionately for her imprudence. Alix answered faintly that she was better, and that she had husbanded all her strength that day that she might be present at the marriage of her young mistress.

Monsieur de Kergant, touched by this mark of affection, placed the daughter of old Kado, by André's side, but the girl's agitated face, her black dress, unsteady step, as well as her unexpected presence, depressed every heart as an augury of evil.

Fleur-de-Lis was evidently disturbed; *his* words became confused, and noticing the surprise of those about him, *he* colored, and relapsed into silence.

All conversation came to an end, and the supper ended in icy silence, when the chapel clock struck midnight, the hour appointed for the priest to be at the altar, where he awaited the bridal pair. The chapel at Kergant, was of the simplest Gothic architecture, and stood on the right of the château, on a slight hill that partially overlooked the courtyard. This hill, which served as base to the tiny edifice, was almost circular; on the side overlooking the country, it was protected by rocks sloping off into a ravine, which

seemed to continue the lower walls of the chapel. Toward the court it was terraced down in a series of green slopes. A flight of some ten or twelve steps gave access from the court-yard to the lawn, extending in front of the porch. Between this hill and the manor moat, opened a wide space communicating with the country, which had served as an approach to the Royalist troops. A well cultivated farm lay back of the hill on the left. All the other sides of the long square forming the court of the château, were shut in by stables and outbuildings.

The movement and the tumult of the multitude moving past had ceased; three hundred men remained behind as a guard to the chief. Half of this number were distributed through the avenue at very small distances apart; the rest were drawn up in a motionless semi-circle at the foot of the steps leading to the chapel.

In the soft light of the stars, the uniforms of the Chasseurs du Roi could just be distinguished. They opened their ranks before the silent cortége which came from the château, receiving them with a military salute.

A few moments later, when the tinkle of the sacred bell announced the commencement of the ceremony, the soldiers dropped upon their knees, with uncovered heads, their hands clasped as if in prayer, while their arms lay on the ground at their sides.

A few scattered candles, faintly and indistinctly

lighted the interior of the chapel, leaving a large portion of the persons present in almost total obscurity. Before the chancel rail knelt Bellah and Fleur-de-Lis. The priest, an old man with white hair, extended his hand, on which glittered the Episcopal ring, over the heads of the fiancées. The Marquis de Kergant was a little behind his daughter; his sister, the Canoness, at his side. Andréé held in her hand the nuptial canopy, impatiently crushing it, while an extraordinary expression of impatience and anxiety, marred the sweetness of her infantine face.

A little further off, leaning on the arm of Kado, stood Alix; her eyes were fixed, and every feature rigid; she looked as if listening to some strange noise. The group of Royalist officers, and the servants of the household, crowded the dark nave of the small church.

The moment for the irrevocable union of the bridal pair had arrived. The priest had addressed to them the sacramental questions. Bellah lifted her brow, paler than her white veil, and extended her hand for the ring which was to chain her whole life; but the young General had dropped the symbolical ring on the steps of the altar; as he lifted his head he heard his name in a cry of lamentable anguish coming from without. He started up and held his breath, as did every one else in the chapel. On every face was the same expression of anxious expectation.

After a brief interval the same plaintive voice repeated the name of Fleur-de-Lis; then the sound of

a fast galloping horse was recognized. The young man rushed out of the chapel, followed by the crowd of spectators. With one leap, he crossed the space separating the porch from the steps. A horse bathed in sweat was panting at the foot of the steps; the soldiers were assisting the rider, who moved with difficulty, to dismount. His brow, his breast, were stained with blood. Some one said that Fleur-de-Lis was there; he turned to him, gasped, uttered the one word, "treachery," and fell dead at the feet of the chief.

At the same moment, as if to confirm the word of this poor fellow, a loud report was heard at a distance. Fleur-de-Lis lifted his arm to impose silence. Several soldiers threw themselves on the ground, and laid their ears to the earth to listen.

The same noise, like the echo of a subterranean storm, was heard again and again.

"That is cannon," said Fleur-de-Lis — "the Army is attacked. To horse!"

While the horses were being brought out with all possible speed, the priest leaned over the horseman and vainly sought for some indications of life. The soldiers, plunged into a sombre stupor, surrounded this group. The inhabitants of the château crowded near; some of the women wept aloud; at each report brought on the night breeze, a shudder ran through the crowd.

"My children," said Fleur-de-Lis, in a steady voice, "we all hear the cannon of the Blues, but we hear our own also. Our brothers call us. In less than a half

hour we shall be at their side. In the name of God and the King, let us march! The roads are free —" Fleur-de-Lis was interrupted by an uproar that seemed to run along the avenue; the cry of, "To arms! The Blues!" was repeated by all the sentinels; then came the noise of a fusillade, quick and sharp. The young General's foot was in the stirrup; he hastily withdrew it, and drawing his sword, cried out: "Follow me, my men!" and rushed down the avenue.

All who could carry arms followed him, and the priest was left alone in the vast court-yard.

"My daughters!" he said, turning toward the chapel with unsteady steps, "let us pray!"

Mademoiselle de Kergant and Alix followed the old man to the foot of the altar, where they prostrated themselves. The other women, incapable of restraint at such a moment, remained upon the steps, and exchanged in low voices, their fears and anxieties.

Some of the windows of the château were open, and blazing with lights. In the court-yard, lighted partially by the windows and by the serene sky above, the abandoned horses were galloping wildly, scenting the powder from afar.

Meanwhile the sounds of the fusillade, mingled with other confused sounds, became each moment more intense and distinct. At intervals, the thunder of the cannon was heard in the distance, silencing the nearer noises. Suddenly the discharge of musketry ceased, only an occasional report was heard, and everything

seemed to indicate that the fighting was over. When, all at once, the entrance to the avenue, was crowded with Chouans.

The women on the lawn shrieked and huddled together. Bellah ran out to them. A discharge of musketry, a flash through the trees, and every window trembled in the chapel; the enemy was at hand.

The private guard of Fleur-de-Lis had fired, and retreating to the court-yard, were reloading their pieces. Bellah, seeing among them the tall figure and white hair of her father, wildly thrust aside her companions, and made her way to the stairs; there she stopped short, struck to the heart with dismay.

A compact mass of Republicans had marched into the avenue, led by a young man on horseback, who, bare-headed and sword in hand, moved rapidly on, undismayed by the shot that fell around him.

By the swift gleams of light, Bellah recognized Hervé.

"Not another shot!" cried the young Commandant; "we are masters of the château!"

As he spoke, a shower of balls from the windows of the old manor brought down some twenty Chouans.

"Not another shot!" repeated the Commandant; "the château is yours!"

"To the Chapel!" answered the ringing voice of Fleur-de-Lis, "to the Chapel! God and the King! God and the King!"

Hervé leaped from his horse; and turning to his

men, gave them some rapid orders, adding a few agitated words recommending to their humanity, the innocent creatures who had taken refuge in the chapel.

"Be at ease, Commandant," said a grave voice, "we know that your jewel of a sister is there, that is enough!"

"Don't try any hazardous experiments with your guns," said Hervé, hastily; "don't fire at all, do you hear? Come on!"

With these words he dashed diagonally across the court-yard, a squad of grenadiers at his heels, while the rest of the men followed more leisurely.

The Royalist Chasseurs had scaled the hill; some of them were already in the chapel; pushing aside the women who were mad with terror, they posted themselves at each window, and at each aperture, and even ascended to the small bell tower on the roof. The others crowded the lawn. Fleur-de-Lis stood in the centre, between the porch and the steps, in one hand his sword, and in the other a pistol.

The Marquis de Kergant and Kado, their faces black with powder, were on either side of their Chief.

The imperative voice of Fleur-de-Lis alone broke the silence that reigned in and about the chapel. The detachment commanded by Hervé, rapidly approached the hill. Fleur-de-Lis raised his sword. Two successive discharges aimed with that wonderful precision that distinguishes the Bretons, strewed the ground with corpses, but Hervé's foot was on the steps.

"Come on!" he cried, "Come on, my men!"

At the same moment, the Grenadiers simultaneously invaded the chapel.

To the impetuous fury of the assailants, the Royalists opposed the energy of despair. A terrible *melée* followed—it was a hand to hand combat, steel met steel, and the clatter and crash of arms filled the air, mingled with groans and imprecations.

At the height of this terrible contest, a red light was suddenly reflected in the arched windows over the door. This light increased, and soon illuminated the court-yard with its sinister glow. Some smoking wads from the guns had fallen in front of a stable opposite the chapel, and set fire to the dry straw. This fire communicated to the interior; large sparks flew through the air among masses of black smoke, while tongues of fire came through the windows of the barn and licked the roof.

The combat, lighted by these flames, continued with increasing violence; the blows dealt were sure and prompt. The wounded and the dead, lay in piles around the hill, and aided the Republicans in their attempts to scale it.

Hervé, wounded in the arm, at last reached the centre of the lawn, and found himself face to face with Fleur-de-Lis, who still invulnerable, stood, his hair waving in the wind, and sword stained with blood.

The two young men uttered a cry as they recognized each other, then their two blades met, but at the first

pass, the sword of Fleur-de-Lis was broken. At this supreme moment, the white form of a woman appeared at one of the windows of the chapel.

“Hervé!” she cried, in a piercing voice that made itself heard above the combat. “Hervé! they are killing my father!”

Hervé’s arm remained uplifted, his eyes left the face of his enemy so suddenly disarmed. He perceived a few steps off, the Marquis de Kergant leaning against the wall, and surrounded by a menacing circle of Grenadiers.

“Bruidoux! men! To the rescue!” cried Hervé, rushing toward the group, “save the old man!”

As he uttered these words, the report of a pistol was heard behind him, and he fell with a faint groan. Fleur-de-Lis, after achieving this act of hate rather than of courage, threw aside his pistol, and picked up a sword fallen from the hand of a wounded man; but Sergeant Bruidoux who had seen the murder, took full aim at the young Chief.

“Coward!” he cried, and fired.

The ball penetrated the breast of Fleur-de-Lis. Not one of the details which we have sought to bring vividly before the eyes of our readers, had escaped the Republican soldiers in the court-yard. The officer to whom the command now fell, raised his voice.

“Back to the court-yard!” he cried; “all of you.”

The grenadiers obeyed, and presently a discharge of musketry from the Republicans swept away all the living on the lawn.

“Let us avenge the Commandant!” shouted the officer; “come on, my men, come on!”

All the men scaled the hill again, led by him, but after the most determined and intrepid exertions, were compelled to fall back under the volley which came from the porch, and from the windows and bell tower.

The soldiers at a new word of command, scattered themselves over the court-yard, where the heat from the fire had become almost unendurable. Some of them took shelter behind the sheds, and behind the wagons, and there took deliberate aim at the windows and bell tower; the success of their shots was shown by the gradually lessening fire from the chapel.

Suddenly a tall figure of almost gigantic stature, emerged from the porch and came out alone upon the lawn.

Bruidoux, who was kneeling at the foot of the slope, started up.

“Boys!” he cried with all the strength of his lungs. “Hold your fire! it is the old Guard, the one who saved my life. Reward him for that, boys—reward him, I tell you!”

It was indeed Kado; he did not appear to have heard the Sergeant’s voice, but profiting by the momentary truce, permitted by the astonished Republicans, he lifted two bodies from out the pile of corpses, those of Hervé and Fleur-de-Lis, and bore them back to the chapel.

“Surrender!” shouted Bruidoux. “Surrender! The fire has caught the bell tower! The chapel is burning!”

No voice was heard in reply; the chairs and benches which barricaded the entrance of the porch were pushed aside, and the massive door of the little church closed with much noise.

The terrible information conveyed by Bruidoux was correct; burning brands from the barn had been carried by the wind to the dry roof of the shed next the chapel, and the flames were already enveloping the bell tower. Two or three Chouans still lingered there, reluctant to leave a spot from which they could take such certain aim; while from the lower windows of the chapel still came an occasional shot.

Bruidoux approached the officer who had taken Hervé's command.

"Captain," he said, "can you do nothing for these poor creatures?"

The officer, with contracted brows and both hands clasping the handle of his sword, the point of which was buried in the earth, watched with sombre gaze the progress of the fire.

"What would you have me do?" he answered, "they have not ceased firing. I cannot sacrifice the life of one of my men uselessly. Look at those fellows up there; do you imagine that they dream of surrendering?"

"I will go and speak to them myself," said Bruidoux. "Will you allow me to promise them their lives?"

"Promise anything," said the officer, turning his face aside, "for this is simply horrible."

Bruidoux hastily rushed up the hill, his clothes were pierced by two bullets, but he pushed on and in safety gained the shelter of the porch. He shook the door violently and cried out:

“Kado! Citizens! Do you want life, liberty? Come out! Both are promised to you! Come out!”

The brave Sergeant's breath was spent in vain, either the roar of the flames covered his voice or a melancholy experience of the crimes by which this war had been tarnished, caused his promises to be discredited. At all events, he could elicit no reply. He did not turn from his self-appointed embassy however, until the shouts of his comrades warned him that the roof of the chapel had begun to fall, and that his retreat would be cut off.

During this time let us see what was going on within the chapel. There was not a square foot of the floor on which the dead were not piled. New victims were constantly falling from the windows, or rolling down the narrow staircase that led to the tower. The arched ceiling was covered with cracks, through which poured dense black smoke, while tiny jets of flame ran at intervals along the cornices.

The old Priest lay lifeless at the foot of the altar; the Canoness and one of the servants of the château, were also dead at his side; other women living and more unhappy, were convulsively weeping and wringing their hands.

Bellah and Alix, with dishevelled hair, were on

their knées, lavishing useless care on Andréé, who had fainted with terror. From time to time the two young creatures turned their distracted eyes on Hervé and Fleur-de-Lis, who lay side by side near the altar.

Kado, aided by two young fellows, had lifted the dead bodies from the sculptured flag-stones that indicated the family vault, and aided by iron bars torn from the balustrade, had pried up a granite slab in front of the altar. At once a flight of stairs was visible; the bars of iron they had used now held up the granite slab. As soon as the task was accomplished, the youths who had aided Kado, snatched their guns, and went back to the window, only to fall dead a few moments later.

As soon as the entrance to the crypt was thus made practicable, the women rushed toward it. Kado pointed out to them the necessity of caution, for were they to overturn the granite slab from its present position, he could not lift it alone, and he had now no one to aid him. "If this misfortune should come to pass," he said, "they were lost, as the last road to safety would be closed." He made them descend one by one, and finally all had disappeared into the darkness below. Turning toward the altar, Kado lifted with one hand, the frail inanimate form of Andréé, and drew Bellah on with the other to the subterranean vault.

"No, no; Hervé first," murmured the young girl, resisting the strong arm of her old servant.

"Do not be troubled, Mademoiselle," answered Kado,

"I promise you that I will save him, but go down at once, or I can answer for nothing."

Mademoiselle de Kergant obeyed. Kado descended after her, bearing Hervé's sister in his arms, but went back to the chapel instantly. The smoke was momentarily becoming more dense.

"Alix! my child," cried Kado, in an agony of suspense, "where are you? I can see nothing."

"I am here, father," answered Alix, "close by you."

"Thank God! my child. Oh! what a night this has been. Where is the Chief? Can you see him? I must rescue him first, and then our young master, if it be God's will. Where is he? Which is Fleur-de-Lis?"

"Here," said the girl, "this is he."

Kado lifted the inanimate body pointed out by Alix, and plunged again into the darkness below.

"Come, Alix!" he cried, "come! You must not linger a moment. Follow me! You are close behind me, are you not?"

"Yes, father," answered Alix, staggering to her feet, but she did not follow her father. She went toward the wounded man lying at the base of the altar. "Fleur-de-Lis," she said, "I told you, did I not, that were you ever to deceive me, I should find a way of revenging myself?"

A sigh escaped from the breast of the wounded man.

"How dastardly has been your conduct!" continued the young girl, and her words came through her close-shut teeth. "How barbarous has been your treatment

of me! Ah! you well knew that I would endure everything rather than reveal to my father the shame of his child, rather than wound the generous heart of my innocent rival. Poor Bellah! I have wounded her sorely. The worst blow of all, however, I have kept for myself. I did not choose that her fair brow should redden at hearing of your infamy. She will weep for you—she will shed her tears, for she did not know you!”

While Alix spoke, the face of Fleur-de-Lis was contracted with an expression of intense agony. He seemed struggling to regain his fast failing strength. His lips parted. “Listen!” he murmured. “I have never loved any one but you. Pride, ambition carried me away, but, before God, I love only you. Alix, take my hand; you are my wife before God!”

“Poor wretch!” said the girl, “he deceives me still; but I love him—I will save him!” at the same moment she wrapped her strong young arms around the Chief, and bore him toward the granite slab, still suspended as we have described.

Standing there at the mouth of the crypt was her father, looking at her with terrible eyes. Alix recoiled, her knees trembled, and her burthen rolled to her feet.

“Father!” she cried in mortal anguish, “leave me to die, but take him!”

“No, I will save neither you nor him,” answered Kado, in a hoarse voice. “Never has treason found a resting place here!”

He turned as he spoke; one touch of his foot removed the two iron bars which held up the slab, and the stone fell with a dull sound.

“Now let us pray to God!” said the old man, solemnly. “Pray, *Monsieur le Duc*, if so be that you understand my words. Pray you for Hervé, if you love him—”

A shriek from Alix interrupted her father. It was the last she ever uttered. Sheets of flame enveloped the chapel; a terrible crash was heard, and the entire roof fell, burying the living and the dead.

One brief hour had witnessed all these disasters. When the pale light of dawn mingled with the last dying flames of the fire, it lighted only a solitude, made terrible by the debris of humanity.

CHAPTER XV.

BURIED ALIVE.

THE cavern, within which was assembled all that remained of the Kergant household, extended into the side of the hill, under a roof sustained by four arches, and on one side by the natural rocks. On the damp soil, the foot struck many a protruding stone, while an occasional fissure in the rock insufficiently renewed the close atmosphere of the crypt. When the granite slab, that closed its only issue, fell back under Kado's foot, no ray of light entered the dreary spot, while, at the same moment, the dull shock that shook the vault announced to the unhappy captives that the secret of their retreat was shared with no living soul, and that their tomb was sealed over their heads.

But Mademoiselle de Kergant was the only one among them all, who realized the horror of their position; the others, silent and almost idiotic from terror, sobbed in a corner. At the noise of the falling walls, Bellah darted up the staircase and sought, with a convulsive effort, to lift the stone, but the strength of a dozen men would have been required to succeed in this attempt. Bellah sank on the steps and covered her face with her burning hands. Presently she rose and felt her way to the place where she had left Andréé.

"May the Good God," she said, as she knelt at her friend's side, "may the Good God spare you the anguish of awakening."

As she spoke, a groan came from the lips of the wounded man who lay near Andréé, whom Bellah had heard Kado call by the name of Fleur-de-Lis.

"You are suffering, Sir," she said, as she leaned over him whom she supposed to be the young chief.

"Bellah! is that you?" murmured the wounded man.

Mademoiselle de Kergant uttered a despairing shriek.

"Hervé!" she cried; "my Hervé!" and her hand ran over the brow and bleeding breast of the young man, but with such tender caution that the touch was like that of the wings of a bird. After a few moments consecrated to silent prayer, and also to secret shame at having forgotten for a moment her dead father, Bellah said softly:

"It is really yourself then, Hervé! Really you! We are together again, but in what a place, and in what an hour! Merciful God! you do not know —"

"I do know," interrupted Hervé; "I am suffering, but I have never lost consciousness. I know where we are, only — I — I dare not ask — Andréé, my little sister?"

"She is here, living, but she has fainted — she is close to you."

"Alas! I cannot thank God! Would it not be better for her — tell me, Bellah — you are courageous,

the stone above has been shut down, has it not? And there is no one left alive in the chapel?"

"No one, unless some miracle has taken place."

"In the name of Heaven! keep Andréé in ignorance of this, dear Bellah, until the very end."

"Hush, Hervé! hush! I hear her move. She is again conscious, and will hear you."

Andréé was, in fact, gradually returning to herself. She extended her arms, and turned on her cold bed, like a child awakening in its cradle.

Mademoiselle de Kergant, leaning over her, called her in a caressing voice. The poor little creature murmured at first a few meaningless words, and then asked if it would not soon be light; but by degrees the knowledge of the terrible truth came to her.

"Where am I?" she cried. "My God! where am I?"

Bellah, covering her with kisses, assured her that she was in safety and with Hervé, at the same time putting the young man's hand into that of his sister. She then informed Andréé of that which it was impossible to conceal from her—the terrible losses they had undergone, and all the circumstances which had compelled her and them to seek a refuge in this subterranean place; but she added that Kado, with two or three of their old servants, had escaped, and that he would come to extricate them from their prison, as soon as it would be possible to do so without running the risk of falling into the hands of the Republicans.

These assurances, added to the presence of a brother whom she had never hoped to see again in this life, appeased André's trouble, and a few rays of daylight, which by this time had found its way through the fissures of the rocks, contributed greatly to her comfort.

The two young girls, with their united strength, assisted Hervé into a position where his wound pained him less; the shot, fired by Fleur-de-Lis, had entered his shoulder, and each movement elicited a faint groan. But he endeavored to smile, and by his calm speech, to soothe the anxiety of his companions.

André did her best, in her turn, to interest him in her childish talk, and thus cause him to forget his pain — her furtive tears fell heavily, however, when he could not see or suspect them.

Bellah left them every little while, and went to the peasant women who sat rocking to and fro, alternately lamenting loudly, and then falling into a dull apathy of despair.

Resistance under great misfortunes is measured less by physical strength, than by that of the soul. Bellah, whose delicate complexion was still pale after weeks of suffering, had developed a new life in this emergency, under which her more robust companions had entirely succumbed. Mademoiselle de Kergant addressed in turn each one of these poor creatures, called them by name, took them by the hand, and spoke tenderly of the faith in which they had been educated, of the God who held them in the hollow of His hand, and

finally succeeded in inspiring them with some degree of resignation.

Several times in the course of each hour this noble young girl returned to this afflicted group. They clung to her dress, kissed her hands, and implored her not to abandon them.

Hervé was, to all appearance, very calm; he had lost much blood, and therefore the wound had given him less fever. Andréé, glad that his sufferings were less, and confident in the illusions with which her fears had been lulled, by degrees recovered much of the gracious vivacity of her nature; she formed projects for the Future, far from suspecting that all the Future of her young life was enclosed within the narrow limits of this funereal cavern. Her innocent faith increased the anguish it was intended to relieve. Mademoiselle de Kergant, anxious to moderate hopes which were soon to be so cruelly disappointed, reminded her gently of the death and mourning, all about her.

“Bellah,” interrupted Hervé, “will you pardon me for the part I have had in all the misfortunes which have overwhelmed you? I ask this forgiveness from your goodness, from your justice.”

“How can I blame you, Hervé,” answered the young girl, “before this wound which you received in your attempt to save my poor father?”

“Tell him that you love him still,” said Mademoiselle de Pelven; “that would be the best thing you could do.”

For Heaven's sake, dear Andréé," cried Bellah.

"Where would be the harm?" interrupted Andréé, with an emotion which did not altogether quench her childish gayety.

"Our misfortunes," she continued, "are, I well know, very terrible. I feel this quite as well as yourself, but why undervalue the consolation sent by God, the Father? It is His hand that has directed all, and I bless it even while I weep. God has not chosen you to become the prey of that bad man, that miserable Fleur-de-Lis, for you were offering yourself up as a sacrifice. I know this, and it is time that Hervé knew it also. Besides, it is useless for you to equivocate, and I will tell you why. You remember your letter — your famous letter? Well, it was I who took it — I sent it to Hervé, and he knows it now by heart, I am very sure!"

Mademoiselle de Kergant was literally stunned by this revelation; then she stammered a few words of reproach, but the trembling hand of the wounded man suddenly grasping hers, Bellah relapsed into silence; her tears fell in a burning shower on Pelven's face.

Andréé drew back, and left the two comparatively alone. She went toward one of the fissures and tried to enlarge it; in doing so, it seemed to her that one of the square stones set with masonry was loose, and moved under her touch. She removed it without the smallest difficulty, and the cavern was filled with light. Andréé uttered a cry of joy, and called to her sister to

come. The removal of the stone had made an opening in the wall into which one could put one's fist. This opening continued through the masonry by a vertical and irregular fissure, but Bellah in vain tried to enlarge it. The only advantage the captives obtained from it was to breathe a less stifling air, and to obtain a glimpse of several of the paving stones in the court, and some green waving branches. This dim vision of the exterior world of life, liberty and sunshine occasioned Made-moiselle de Kergant an acute pang. Andréé, on the contrary, was confirmed by this prospect, limited as it was, in the hope of a speedy deliverance, and, indeed, regarded it as half realized. She could not tear herself from this loop-hole, but continued to watch there, with feverish impatience, for the coming of a liberator.

Bellah, profiting by one of these moments when Andréé was absorbed in this vain contemplation, asked Hervé, in a low voice, if it were not possible that their united voices might be heard from outside, through this opening, the form and dimensions of which she described.

Hervé replied that he did not think it possible on account of the thickness of the wall, and the irregularities of the aperture which would break the voice, and probably smother it entirely.

"In any case," he said, "the sounds would be too faint, to be noticed by any indifferent person, and if any one came in search of a relative or a friend, he would assuredly enter the chapel. In that case we

should certainly hear his steps, and it would be time enough then to attempt this last resource. Until then our cries would only have the effect of increasing the terror of those about us, and Andréé and the others would no longer entertain a hope. Oh! Bellah! with what joy I would give every drop of blood in my veins, to spare you and the others, all that I foresee."

"But, Hervé, all is not lost. They must come, if only to bring the—" Bellah's voice was choked, and her lips trembled convulsively.

Hervé continued presently.

"Bellah," he said, "it is impossible for me to deceive you, you do not desire me to do so, either; they will come, of course, as you say, but not for two days, perhaps for three. The whole country is in a state of terror. I have witnessed scenes of wholesale butchery like this, abandoned for days, and then, too, is it likely that those who come will know the secret of this cave? Will you then have strength enough to utter a cry? And would this cry be heard? This is more than doubtful."

"Then, Hervé, there is no hope," said Bellah, calmly. "Speak without fear, I am ready to hear you."

"We have," answered Hervé, "one hope—only one. It is Francis alone, who can save us. His duty attached him to the side of the General. If he has survived the battle which has taken place this night, I do not doubt that he—I don't know what he would do, but it seems to me that I would save him, if I were in his place and he were here. Poor Francis!"

Long hours thus passed away; the day was drawing to a close, and the crypt was becoming very dark. Andréé had seated herself at her brother's side. She began to suspect that she had been deceived, and was silent and motionless. When the last ray of day-light disappeared, she could no longer restrain her anguish; her sobs were mingled with words of despair. Bellah took her in her arms, but her caresses had no power to soothe the poor child. Hervé, whose fever had set in with violence, with difficulty, retained his reason.

At the other end of the cavern, the four women servants offered a still more melancholy spectacle. Their hopes had vanished, and they were beginning to feel the first pangs of hunger, and to dread the bitter end. They had awakened from their torpor, and rushed about the cavern, striking their foreheads against the wall, and uttering wild shrieks of despair.

These outcries were so terrible, and so suggestive of wild beasts, that Andréé ceased to sob, and presently fell into a profound sleep of exhaustion; and soon the other women, yielding to the pious consolations lavished upon them by their young mistress, succumbed also to exhausted nature, and relapsed into silence and apparent insensibility.

We will touch but lightly on the hours that followed. Mademoiselle spent them on her knees in prayer; Hervé had become delirious, and strange words fell from his lips. Bellah made no effort to arouse him from this delirium, which was at least forgetfulness.

Towards morning, she too, yielded to the sleep that weighed down her heavy lids.

She was awakened by Hervé's voice calling her with strange reiteration.

"Bellah! Bellah!" he said; "Listen! I hear them walking in the chapel; I hear steps! There are people in the chapel."

Bellah at first believed that the wounded man was deceived by the illusions of fever, but, when she listened, she heard distinctly a sound of footsteps over her head. She started up, the day-light had again crept into the cavern, she found the staircase, mounted it rapidly, and struck the stone that covered it with her hand.

"No, no, not there!" said Hervé. "It is impossible for them to hear you; go to the opening, Bellah, and call, call with all your strength!"

Bellah rushed down the stairs, and placing her lips to the aperture which chance had shown them the day before, she uttered several cries in quick succession; then held her breath to listen.

"My God!" she murmured in despair; "I hear no one sound, Hervé! They have left the chapel!"

Hervé did not reply.

"If we could only all call together," continued Bellah, "perhaps —"

As she spoke she ran to her companions in misfortune, and did her best to arouse them from their stupor, by imploring them to join their voices to hers. Andréé

alone seemed to comprehend her words; she half rose upon her knees, but fell back unconscious. Bellah shook her head sadly, and then went back to the opening in the wall, and looked out.

"I see them!" she cried; "I see them!"

"Who are they? Do you know them?" said Hervé.

"Yes; it is the young officer."

"Francis?"

"And the Sergeant. I see two more—they are going away, but slowly and reluctantly."

"Try again, Bellah, once more! Summon all your strength. In God's name, try again!"

Bellah repeated her cries at short intervals.

"Well, are they coming? Do they hear?" asked Hervé, in a choked voice.

"No, no! Good Heavens! how cruel you are! I no longer see them—they have passed the only bit of the court-yard which I can see; but there they are again, at the entrance of the avenue—they are going! Oh! Lord God in Heaven! Make them hear me! Help, Francis! Help!"

Bellah had thrown into her voice all her remaining strength. Hervé questioned her again, but she answered him with difficulty.

"They have stopped. They are turning back, I think. Yes; I think they have heard me! They seem to be consulting each other! Alas! they have gone—they have gone!"

As Bellah uttered these last words amid strangling sobs, she fell fainting upon the ground.

Hervé had a new attack of delirium — a strange phantasmagoria passed before his eyes; gay and laughing images dissipated the horrors of reality. He heard again footsteps above his head, and fancied that there was some great labor going on there. Suddenly — was this delirium? — the pure sunlight entered the crypt in floods; human beings stood at the head of the steps; dark shadows were clearly defined against the radiant sky. “Pelven!” shouted a youthful voice.

“Help, Francis! Help, my Francis!” answered Hervé.

The old château had been preserved from the fire by the massive thickness of its walls, and an hour after the scene we have just related, Commandant Hervé lay in the great antique bed wherein he had slept in his childhood.

Within the deep recess of a window, an old Surgeon in uniform was arranging his professional implements. A personage, whose appearance was both solemn and ridiculous, and whose pantaloons were covered to the knees by a white apron, raised with one hand the head of the wounded man, and presented him, with the other, a cup of bouillon.

“I am inclined to believe, Commandant,” said this singular nurse, “that you had a devilish night in that catacomb.”

“Yes, my good old Bruidoux, the night was indeed pretty severe. How is my sister?”

“Coming up like a flower, Commandant. Indeed,

everybody is doing well, except that poor little fellow, Kado's boy, and he nearly breaks my heart. But I have an idea, Commandant. I think I will adopt that boy; he deserves it, for, in the first place, he is an orphan; in the next place, he saved my life in the forest; and lastly, he has just saved yours. If we had not met him in the avenue, and if he had not led us to that fissure in the rocks, we should have gone for good. I think, therefore, that I had best adopt him. I will be his father; Colibri, on the other side, will act as mother, because he, you know, is especially amiable and gentle."

Francis came in at this moment.

"Commandant," he said, "Mademoiselle Bellah is improving, ever since the Surgeon said that your wound was not dangerous, and that he would bring you round all right."

"I can do nothing of the sort," interposed the old Surgeon, "if you do not all get out of here. I will not have so much talking in this room; do you understand? Now be off with you!"

He turned the Sergeant and Francis from the apartment, and Hervé was soon sleeping profoundly.

THE END.

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